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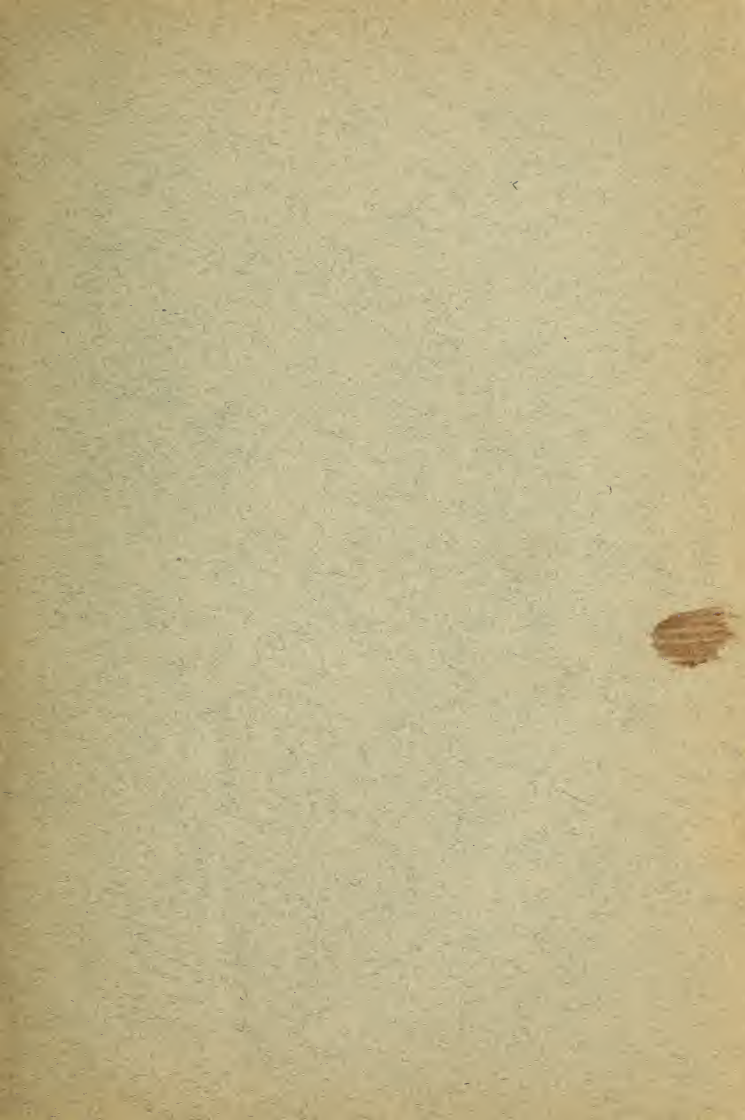


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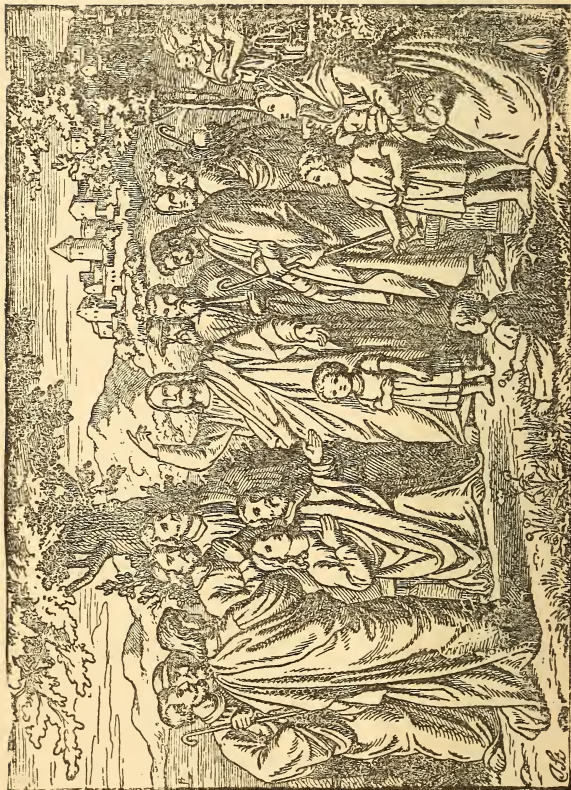
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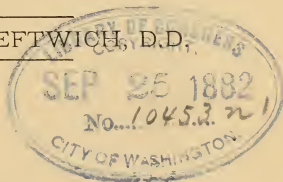
THE CHILD IN THE MIDST.

THE
CHILD IN THE MIDST;

OR,

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL OF TO-DAY.

BY W. M. LEFTWICH, D.D.



17
B. 82

"And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. xviii. 2, 3.

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"I FIND THESE SCHOOLS
SPRINGING UP WHEREVER I GO.
PERHAPS GOD MAY HAVE A DEEPER END THEREIN
THAN MEN ARE AWARE OF. WHO KNOWS BUT
SOME OF THESE SCHOOLS MAY BECOME
NURSERIES FOR CHRISTIANS?"

—John Wesley, *Anno Domini* 1774.

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PREFACE.

THE leading objects of this little book are to set forth the religious claims and capabilities of children, and to discuss the methods adopted for the development and culture of child-life in the Church of God. To do this, the theory and practice of the Sunday-school of to-day, and the pastoral instruction of children, are discussed in the light of many years' experience and the most careful observations made in the practical work of a pastor. Formulas for conducting children's-meetings, concerts, anniversaries, Bible-readings, Sunday-school conventions, Conferences, Christmas and Easter services, etc., are given as helps to those who need them.

The work is a labor of love for the children of the Church, and a grateful offering to Him who said, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

THE AUTHOR.

Nashville, Tenn., June 28, 1882.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

WE are pleased with this little book. The author has discussed the whole subject of the modern Sunday-school in a clear, concise, and common sense manner, giving a satisfactory statement and illustration of the various topics introduced, and furnishing much valuable information, with numerous suggestive outlines and models for programmes, anniversary exercises, etc. We have not seen anywhere so much important matter connected with the theory, organization, and general management of Sunday-schools compressed into so small a compass. Such a work has long been needed, and often called for. The great end of all true Christian work—the salvation of souls—is steadily kept in view throughout the book. We would call special attention to the author's views on *the religious susceptibilities of children*. We deem this a most important subject, and one that has not received the attention its transcendent merits demand. May the blessing of God go with this new minister of truth and grace to all the homes and Sunday-schools of our people in the land!

W. G. E. CUNNINGHAM,
Sunday-school Editor.

Nashville, Tenn., July, 1882.

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THE CHILD IN THE MIDST.

PART ONE.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT IS A SUNDAY-SCHOOL?

IT is the Church studying the word of God. The theory that the Sunday-school is "the nursery of the Church," and designed for children only, with adults to officer and teach them, is a relic of the past. It grew up naturally out of the historic custom of catechising children upon the doctrines of Christianity observed by the Church long before Wesley's day, which Wesley's mother enlarged and utilized for a more intense and practical study of the Holy Scriptures, and which, upon the suggestion of Hannah Ball, Robert Raikes applied so successfully and memorably to the poor, neglected, and ignorant children of Gloucester, England. In the application and unfolding of this original idea, the Sunday-school has long been denominated "the nursery of the Church," and as such it was intended only for children.

But the providential growth of the Sunday-school in the last days has so enlarged its scope and work that it can now be defined only as the whole Church, young and old, assembled on Sunday, and divided into classes for convenience, with suitable teachers, all devoutly engaged in the study of the Holy Scriptures. Some have styled it, and not inappropriately, "the catechetical and theological institute of the Church." The law of the Church clearly authorizes this theory in the following direction: "Let Sunday-schools be formed in all our congregations where ten *persons* can be collected for that purpose." The General Conference of 1878 recognized this higher and broader meaning by substituting the word "persons" for "children," making it possible for a Sunday-school to be organized and operated under the law of the Church without any children at all.

The theory that the Sunday-school is the Church studying the word of God possesses many advantages, and may correct many evils. Its advantages in part are these: It enlarges the scope, and extends the benefits and blessings of the Sunday-school to the whole Church. It makes more general and intense the interests

of the whole Church in this work, and offers a pleasant and profitable school of religious instruction to men of the world who may be inclined, from whatever cause, to seek religious knowledge. Many find Christ in the Sunday-school who might not be led to Christ by the pulpit. It helps parents to train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and at the same time it helps every adult to a general and thorough knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and will thus hasten the time when "they shall be all taught of God." Let this idea of the Sunday-school become general, and this theory be put into practice everywhere, and with the literary helps now at hand the Church will soon be redeemed from the long-standing reproach of being "wofully ignorant of the Scriptures," and will hasten her divinely-appointed mission to "spread scriptural holiness over these lands."

Among the evils which will be corrected by it are these: It will prevent the Sunday-school from being practically divorced from the Church. It will prevent the larger boys and girls from "graduating" and leaving the school. It will prevent the absence of the children from the congregation. It will make

the Church and Sunday-school one in *fact* and in *work*, as they are one in *theory*. Are not these evils, so long and so loudly complained of, largely due to the theory that the Sunday-school is "the nursery of the Church," and intended only for children? The statement of the question suggests its own answer.

CHAPTER II.

THE OBJECT OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

WHAT is the object of the Sunday-school? "To bring children to Christ," is the usual answer. But why *children* only? Why not *adults* also? We must not confine this work to children. An intelligent lady consented to teach a class of little girls, but she herself was not a Christian. The superintendent and teachers prayed for her daily for nearly two months, when she gave herself to Christ, and was happily saved. A gentleman who had not attended Church for years dropped into the Sunday-school one morning to hear the children sing. Their glad songs recalled his own childhood, and awakened tender emotions to which he had long been a stranger. He re-

mained to weep, and when the service was turned into a testimony-meeting he was thoroughly awakened, and bowed before God as a penitent, believing with his heart unto righteousness, and with his mouth making confession unto salvation. Why not adults also? We must seek a broader and better definition of the object of Sunday-schools. How will this do? "To win souls to Christ, make men wise unto salvation, and instruct and edify the body of Christ." Nor will this definition of the object fully meet the case, unless we keep in mind the fact that the one business of the Church is to *preach* the gospel. This is its sole commission. For this purpose, "he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Now, the great object of all this organization and classification is that the gospel may be so preached and taught as to make it "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;" *to save souls*, to bring men to repentance, and induce them to call upon God. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then

shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" The gospel order, then, is this: Men are saved through faith in Christ; and faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, and the word of God by a living ministry. If this defines the work of the Church, it also defines the work of the Sunday-school; and if it defines the one supreme object of Church-work, it also defines the one supreme object of the Sunday-school—for the Church and the Sunday-school are one.

The Church could not well employ its talent and fulfill its great task without the Sunday-school to organize the laborers, laymen and ladies, for systematic and efficient work in the Lord's vineyard. Through the Sunday-school organization the Church can best reach the poor and neglected children, and through them their parents, and thus go "into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in." This was its original design, and should not be allowed to drop out of the plan and purpose of the larger organization of the Church for work in this form. It should be held to this

original plan. It is true that the Sunday-school, as also the Church, magnifies its work and mission in the social, intellectual, and moral culture of society, in benevolent and charitable work, and in many other interests of communities; but these are all subordinate and subsidiary to the one great object of winning souls to Christ, and making men wise unto salvation—in which work the maturest saint and the smallest child may take part, and also share the grace. Many of the brightest crowns in heaven will be worn by Sunday-school teachers who have been “wise to win souls,” and have “turned many to righteousness.”

CHAPTER III.

WHO SHOULD BE IN THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL?

1. PASTORS. The pastor of one congregation should be in his Sunday-school as regularly as in his pulpit. The pastor of a circuit composed of several congregations should dispose of himself and his presence to the best advantage for the whole work; not give his entire time to one school, but as a general thing be in the school of the congregation where he preaches

that day. Every pastor should be *felt* by his presence and pastoral labors in the Sunday-school.

2. *Superannuated, supernumerary, and local preachers* should each be actively engaged in Sunday-school work, as officers or teachers, according to their several ability, when health, strength, and the claims of the pulpit upon them will permit. Who so well qualified for this work? and who so able to stir into activity and lead the Churches where they live? The man of God who is not able to preach may be abundantly useful as a Sunday-school teacher. No place in the Church so appropriate and important for a superannuated preacher as the Sunday-school, sitting among the teachers or the scholars, "hearing them and asking them questions." The Church loses much in the failure of this large and influential class to labor diligently in this delightful field. Pastors should look after them.

3. *Church officials.* Stewards, leaders, trustees, etc., should labor personally in the Sunday-school. They constitute the Quarterly Conference, and the law of the Church makes the Quarterly Conference "a board of managers to superintend the interests of Sunday-schools

and the instruction of children, and to elect superintendents," etc. Many members of the Quarterly Conference are content to give their official vote and sanction to the work of Sunday-schools without so much as looking into them. They never go into the Sunday-school as officers of the Church, either to work themselves or to inspect personally the work of others. As directors to superintend the interests of a bank, a manufacturing company, a railroad, an asylum, or an institution of learning, they would act very differently, and from *principle*. There is utterly a fault at this point with some of our ablest Church officials. What is the remedy? Get out of their minds the idea that the Sunday-school is intended for children only; impress upon them their responsibility for "the interests of Sunday-schools and the instruction of children," growing out of their official relation to the Church; and labor with them in the gospel until they are impelled by their love of Christ and his cause to enter heartily into this field also, and to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord." A steward who says that he has to work so hard all the week that he cannot get up in time to attend the Sunday-school on Sunday morning

must have a conscience seared to utter indifference to moral obligation, and weakened to impotency in respect to the highest duty of a Christian, if he can sleep soundly the holy hours away. *Per contra:* A steward had a class of girls from twelve to sixteen in Sunday-school; they studied the lessons well, were bright and intelligent above the average, but they were not Christians. The burden of their souls was upon him so heavily that as Sunday approached he could scarcely sleep at all. One Saturday night he called in the pastor to join him in prayer to God for them. Sunday morning they were again on their knees by day-dawn praying for them. That day he pleaded with each girl personally to give her heart to Jesus, and was surprised to see how readily and easily each of the seven yielded and trusted Jesus for salvation. Do likewise.

CHAPTER IV.

WHO ELSE SHOULD BE IN THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL?

1. PARENTS. The duty of parents to "train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" cannot be relegated to the Sun-

day-school. Many seem to think so. The obligation to "train up a child in the way he should go" comes of the relation between the parent and the child, and is not arbitrary. The Sunday-school cannot alter that relation, nor can it take the place of the parent and become a party to the relationship; neither does any logic, morals, common sense, or scripture, sanction the idea that the Sunday-school can meet the parent's obligation to his child. The Sunday-school can only *help* the parent in this most important work; and so valuable is this help that no right-thinking and right-feeling father or mother will decline this help, which may be *vital*.

The parent's duty to be in the Sunday-school as an active participant in its work is three-fold: to himself, to his child, and to the Church. To himself, to study the word of God for himself; to his child, to teach the word of God by precept and example; to the Church, to work in the Lord's vineyard, and win souls to Christ. Parents cannot escape this obligation without damage to themselves, their children, and the Church. It is quite common nowadays for children to lead their parents to the Sunday-school, to the

house of God, to Christ, to heaven. A grandfather, who had not been in the Lord's house for many years, and who was growing feeble with age, who had resisted the entreaties of wife and children, was influenced by a grandchild, a bright little girl, to go with her to Sunday-school. He was charmed. His old heart was softened, and came back to him as the heart of a little child. He remained for worship. God touched his heart and melted it with his love, and when one Sunday morning the little girl arose to present herself for membership in the Church, she crossed the aisle, took the hand of her grandfather, an eminent jurist, and led him to the altar, and to the minister, to receive with her the vows of Church-membership. "A little child shall lead them." This story is only one of thousands which show that in many cases the natural order is reversed, and in the failure of parents to lead their children to Christ, God uses the children to bring their parents to Christ.

A mother had been so indifferent, cold, and worldly-minded, that she declined to remove her Church-membership with her residence and suffered herself to drop out of the

Church, and to neglect the duties of a Christian. Thus she lived only for the world for years, until her little daughter, eight years old, who was attending Sunday-school, began to ask questions about the Christian life which startled the mother; and when day after day the child pleaded for permission to join the Church, the mother found that others had been doing for her child what she had neglected to do, and she sought the pastor, came back into the Church, and became a devout Christian, as she said, for the sake of her children as well as for her own good.

The law of God makes parents primarily responsible for the Christian training and nurture of their own children. The Sunday-school is universally recognized as the most efficient help in this work; therefore, every parent and person, who is responsible under divine law for the Christian character and culture of children, should be in the Sunday-school, with a view of utilizing to the utmost extent this school of Christ in the salvation of their children. How Christian parents, who spend so much time and money on the education and personal accomplishments of their children, can be so indifferent to their moral

and religious nurture is as far beyond ordinary understanding as it is below the first and plainest duty.

CHAPTER V.

CHILDREN IN THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

THE Sunday-school, under Robert Raikes and his immediate successors, was directed principally to neglected children, and was considered primarily as a missionary agency for children not in Christian families. Children were gathered into the Sunday-school and taught—at first by paid teachers—to spell, read, and cipher. By this means thousands of children obtained the rudiments of an education. It was distinctly a mission-work for the intellectual, moral, and religious improvement of neglected children. Under this idea it was looked upon as a novel instrumentality for the benefit of a limited class, and this benefit scarcely looked to what is now the ultimate object of all Sunday-school work—to bring sinners to Christ. Indeed, the child's capacity to love Jesus and serve him, to love God and keep his commandments, was held so severely to the tests of its capacity to under-

stand the technical doctrines of Christianity, that the Church stood between the children and Jesus, and "rebuked those that brought them." But as the religious capabilities of children grew upon the Church, the domain and work of the Sunday-school increased, until its plans and provisions now embrace *all* the children of the Church, and the neglected children besides. The value of instructing children in the truths of the Bible and in the principles and precepts of Christianity is now universally recognized by the Christian Church, while the early conversion and consistent piety of very many who have been brought to Jesus in the Sunday-school have gradually convinced Christian parents of the religious capabilities of their children, and turned the heart of the Church to the Sunday-school as a precious and powerful agency for the spiritual culture of her children. The Sunday-school is a necessity in this all-important work.

While the modern Sunday-school may furnish methods and means for the religious instruction of children widely different from those used in ancient times, yet the duty of instructing them in divine things comes to us

from God's ancient people, and with all the divine sanctions of the original covenant of grace and the added authority of all the dispensations. The covenant with Abraham included his children. Horne's "Introduction to the Holy Scriptures" informs us that at the "Feast of the Passover" the Jews were accustomed to "clear the tables, that the children might *inquire* and be *instructed* in the nature of the feast." When Moses was commanded to summon all Israel "to appear before the Lord" to hear the reading of the law, he was told of God "to gather the people together, men, women, and *children*." And when Moses was repeating the law to Israel, he said, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children," etc. When Joel cried, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, and call a solemn assembly," he did not forget the "children," for they were never omitted from the plans and purposes of God's kingdom. They may be excluded from the Church, but never from the kingdom of God. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." David gave thanks unto God because "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained

strength;" and when Jesus saw and approved of the children's worship in the temple, he changed "ordained strength" to "perfected praise," and accepted the children's devotions in the temple as "perfected praise." All the children should be in the Lord's temple, to be instructed in the Lord's word and worship, for the strength and beauty of Zion. The strength and beauty of the Church of to-day is its recognition of Christ in childhood, and the rights of childhood in Christ and his Church.

The starlight which shines upon us from above the manger of the Christ-child will yet teach the wise men that a child's face is a grander study than the stars.

CHAPTER VI.

CHILDREN IN THE CHURCH.

SLOWLY and reluctantly does the Church come to a full recognition of the rights of children, under the covenant of grace. In theory the Church is nearer right than in practice. Both the sentiment and practice of the Church are in conflict with the theory that re-

lates children to the Church. In the late Ecumenical Conference, in London, the following proposition was formulated: "1. All baptized children are to be regarded as infant members of the Church, potentially Christian in character, and having, in virtue of their relationship to Christ, a claim to all such privileges as are appropriate to their tender years." And in the formal "Address of the Ecumenical Conference," which embodies the mature wisdom of that great representative body of Methodists, the following language occurs: "We recognize as of the highest importance the conversion and Christian nurture of children. To this end let them be solemnly consecrated to God in Christian baptism, and let us observe with pious care all the obligations of the baptismal covenant. All children are to be regarded as redeemed by the blood of Christ, and as dear to him, and justly entitled to the tenderest care of the Church. They should be taught at home, and in all our Sunday-schools, the doctrines of our Church, and be educated in all the principles of our holy Christianity." These words are addressed "to all the ministers and members of all the Methodist Churches throughout the world," and must

be accepted as the universal sentiment of Methodism as to the relation of children to the Church. The Church must "recognize as of the highest importance the *conversion* and Christian nurture of children." But many do not believe in the conversion of children at all, and many more do not believe in taking children into the Church. Now, let the practice conform to the theory, and children will soon crowd the temple of God, and make its praise perfect.

The incoming light, recently turned on, and the on-rushing forces of the kingdom of God have brought the Church through a new experience upon this subject, and into a higher consciousness of the value and power of childhood. This new experience has suggested a change of plans, a revision of literature, and a recognition, at last, of the eternal truth that to reach the highest Christian manhood we must come back to the innocence, purity, simplicity, and faith of childhood. Childhood and Christian manhood are so correlated that the Church which has in it the largest proportion of childhood will have the child-life and the Christ-life developed in her Christian character to the highest degree. "Except ye

be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me," for "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

The "child in the midst" of the disciples is teaching the Church the nature of the kingdom of heaven more eloquently than any other preacher of to-day. The ethics of Christianity startles the world with the new doctrine that to develop the grandest manhood we must "become as little children." There is a beautiful painting in the National Gallery at Edinburgh, which represents Christ laying his hand on the head of a little child, seated in its mother's lap, in the midst of the disciples, and saying, "Except ye become as little children, ye can in nowise enter into the kingdom of heaven," with the disciples, who had disputed with each other for the chief places in his kingdom, standing near with downcast eyes and blushing faces, and the Pharisees a little farther off, trembling under the mild rebuke of this, to them, strange doctrine.

“Gentleness shall make us great,” and “wisdom is oftentimes nearer when we stoop than when we soar.”

CHAPTER VII.

CHILDREN IN THE CONGREGATION.

THE “missing link” between the Sunday-school and the congregation is of more importance than the so-called “missing link” in the theory of Evolution. To establish regular connection between the public worship in the congregation and the children of the Sunday-school is a difficult problem to solve. How to bring the children into the congregation, and keep them there as regular hearers of the word, are questions worthy of the wisest thought of the Church. This problem will never be solved under the old theory that “the Sunday-school is the nursery of the Church,” and intended for children only. Children reason about it, and say, “The Sunday-school is for us, the public congregation for grown folks;” and if they are required to attend public worship, they do it with a feeling of constraint and compulsion, irksome and repulsive. This fact, and the further fact that no provis-

ion is made for the children in the regular service of the sanctuary, have led some of the wisest men to question the expediency of requiring them to attend public service. "How much of public preaching is utterly unintelligible and useless to them!" says Rev. Dr. Tyng, in "Forty Years' Experience in Sunday-schools." "Often, necessarily, of subjects beyond their reach; often, unnecessarily, in language which they cannot comprehend." President Sears, of Brown University, says: "I am by no means sure of the good effect on children of sitting in listlessness, and acquiring habits of inattention in the house of God, when nothing is offered to them from the pulpit, and they are not expected to understand, or to have a part in the exercises of public worship." Rev. Newman Hall asks: "Should little children be encouraged to attend our public services? If those services are suited to adults, will the children be interested? And if not, is it likely they will love the house and day of God?" In a prize-essay of the London Sunday-school Union, which declares "against the practice of taking little or ignorant children to the public service of the sanctuary," the following language occurs:

“What habits are really formed by practice? The habits of sleeping, of inattention and listlessness, of day-dreaming and vain thoughts, and of dislike and aversion to the Sabbath and the sanctuary. These habits are more or less formed in every child so trained, and cling to them in after-life with almost unconquerable force.” To this may be added the testimony of every observant pastor, and every Christian parent; and this too while children and youth constitute the larger and the more impressible portion of every community. Does the commission to “preach the gospel to every creature” restrict it to every *adult* creature? The deplorable, if not criminal, deficiency of religious instruction in the family, and the infrequency of the regular public ministrations of the gospel in many parts of the country, leaving children to grow up in a Christian country almost without “the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” enhance, many times over, the gravity and force of this position. What can be done to meet the case? Can the Church rest satisfied while her own baptized children are excluded from the public ministrations of the gospel by the very terms in which the word of life is preached?

If our children grow up in ignorance and sin, and our young people sadly and hopelessly stray from the religious fold of their fathers, who is to blame? Who must bear the responsibility? Is there no remedy? Let us see.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHILDREN IN PUBLIC WORSHIP.

THAT children should share in the public worship of the sanctuary none will deny. When Jesus came to Jerusalem, he found "the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David;" but "the chief priests and scribes," like many similar Church-officials of this day, "were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" If he was pleased with the worship of the children then, he is pleased now; and if we play the part of the "chief priests and scribes," we must expect his rebuke. Children are entitled to a full share in sanctuary services, and are as well fitted for an active part in divine worship as adults are.

The rights of children to the privileges and worship of the sanctuary are secured by the same covenant which secures the rights of adults. They rest upon the same basis, and stand or fall together; and by every consideration, human and divine, they are entitled to their share in public worship. But you say, "They cannot understand it." Will you exclude them from public worship on this ground? Then you must exclude all others who cannot understand it. This would require your chief priests and scribes to sit at the door of the sanctuary and decide upon the qualifications of every worshiper. Are you prepared for this? But you say, "They become listless and sleepy." That is because you give them no share in the worship; you have nothing for them. Let them understand that they are expected to share in the worship. Feed them from the pulpit with food convenient for them, and let them sing, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and they will be glad in the Lord, and rejoice in the Rock of their salvation. This is no new idea; it is an ancient custom—as old as Moses, and Samuel, and Ezra, and Jesus. The departure from it is a modern innovation. It is in evidence, all through

Church history, that when Zion has prospered her children have been diligently taught of the Lord; and in the days of Zion's languishing and sloth, not Jeremiah only, but also the wise and prudent of every age of the Church have lamented that "the young children lack bread, and no man breaketh it unto them." The commission, "Feed my lambs," is as imperative as the other, "Feed my sheep." Shall the minister feed only the sheep from the pulpit? "Shall he only teach the adult mind and heart?" Says an eloquent advocate of children's claims: "Shall he say, 'Ho, ye men and women, who can understand introduction, proposition, head, points, peroration, and application, come ye and hear the truth?' Shall he say to the simple-minded, 'I cannot come down to you?' Shall he say to the little children, 'I have no crumbs for you?'" "But I cannot preach to children." You can, and, with the same time, thought, and study given to your preparation for the instruction and edification of children that you give to your preparation to preach to adults, you cannot only feed but save the lambs of the fold. A New England pastor says: "As many as one-half of our parishioners are under the age of

sixteen years, and one-third, according to my bills for forty-eight years, die under ten." Dr. Kirk says: "Christian families have but a small portion of the youthful population. We must then look mainly to the pastor and Sunday-school teacher for their religious nurture." Another writer adds: "Nor can he whose commission requires him to feed the lambs, as well as the sheep, *afford* to give up the instruction of the young to other hands." Let us prayerfully ponder these things.

CHAPTER IX.

SPECIAL SERVICE FOR CHILDREN.

CHILDREN should not only have a share in the regular worship of God's house, but special service should be held for them. The sermon should be prepared for them, and preached to them. The singing should be done by them, and all the worship of the hour should be adapted to their comprehension, and designed to call out and direct their devotions. This special service for children may be held on Sunday afternoon where the Sunday-school meets in the morning, or *vice versa*. It should

also be held occasionally on Sunday morning at eleven o'clock, and constitute the regular service of the day. How often, the pastor must determine for himself and his own congregation.

In a station, and especially in a city church, the special service for children should be held in the afternoon of every Sunday in the year; or in the forenoon, where the Sunday-school meets in the afternoon. How such service should be conducted depends upon the pastor, the place, and the children. Certainly no stereotyped form can be prescribed. Each pastor has his own talent and adaptations, and no two pastors would conduct a children's service just alike. A few general directions may be given, out of an experience of more than twenty years.

The children should take an active part in the service. This will quicken their interest and attention, and impress the service upon them the more deeply. Let the children sing; let all the children sing, and let them sing often during the service. The pastor, or leader, can help them to sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also, by selecting suitable hymns for devotional exercises, and

now and then explaining the meaning of the verse in a few words. The gospel may be the power of God unto salvation when sung as well as when read and preached. Let the children repeat with the pastor, or leader, the Lord's Prayer at the conclusion of the opening prayer. Catechise the children upon the Commandments, the history, teachings, and works of Jesus, and upon the conditions of salvation, and illustrate the subject by appropriate and *truthful* stories; not too many, but such as will make the lesson impressive and practical. Close the service by repeating the Creed in concert. Cards with the Creed and the Commandments on them may be given to the children, and used to advantage. In reading the Scriptures, it is a good plan to let the children respond by reading alternate verses with the leader; not at every service, but sometimes. In all of these items children can take an active part in the service, and will be interested and profited. Vary the order of exercises within the limits of propriety. Have the children all together, and on the front seats, so that they can stimulate and support each other. Never stand in the pulpit, but come down to them, and make yourself famil-

iar with them. Put yourself on a level with them, without *seeming* to do so—be natural and easy, gentle and affectionate; win their confidence and love, and you will have but little trouble to draw them to Christ.

The advantage of special service for children at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning, occasionally, say once a month, or once a quarter, is not only to preach the gospel to them, but also to impress upon them the importance of public worship, and their own position and value in the Church, to bring adults to worship with them, and then we can the more successfully bring them into the congregation to worship with adults. The affectionate pastor of the children will always have them in his congregation.

CHAPTER X.

PREACHING TO CHILDREN.

It requires the utmost effort of ability to preach successfully to children. In this some men are specially gifted, but they are few. Most preachers require for this work much study, long practice, and all the helps in reach. Cecil says: "Nothing is easier than to *talk* to

children, but to talk to them as they ought to be talked to is the very last effort of ability. It requires great genius to throw the mind into the habits of children's minds. I aim at this, but I find it the utmost effort of ability. No sermon ever put my mind half so much on a stretch." Dr. Newton says: "My children's sermons cost me more time and labor than any that I preach." Only a few preachers are gifted with this talent. It is the best gift. Let it be used freely. Preachers who have tried to handle religious truth so as to interest and instruct children, and have twisted and stammered in nervous torment under the consciousness of failure, have the cordial sympathy of a vast army of fellow-sufferers. But when it is understood that children must be preached to, and when the command, "Feed my lambs," is recognized as equally binding and imperative as the other, "Feed my sheep," no man can consider himself fully qualified for the ministry, and the care of the flock as an under-shepherd, until he has learned how to preach to children. The wisest men of the Church are pleading the interest of a vast and needy multitude of souls—children, if you please—to which the attention of candidates for the ministry

should be turned in their preparation for this great work. John Cotton Smith, in treating of this subject, says: "Jesus would not have imposed upon his ministers a duty which he had not given them the ability to perform." The human mind is capable of great expansion and flexibility under culture, and the man who can preach well to educated adults, can by prayerful study and practice preach well to children. "Where there is a will there is a way," applies here as well as elsewhere.

The following prerequisites may be helpful to young preachers by way of suggestions: There must be the *will* to do it; *preparation* for the work by careful study of the subject and the object; *have something to say*, with your ideas clearly defined upon that something before you begin; *have a plan*—know how to begin and close; *use simple language*—be plain, artless, direct; let your subject be illuminated with *illustrations*—a few unvarnished, truthful stories from child-life, and comparisons taken from familiar things. The attention and interest of children can be quickened by asking questions, easy of answer, now and then in the run of the discourse. Speak from a heart filled with the Holy Ghost, and bubbling over with

love for children. Go before children with something to say, a plan of saying it, with simple language, and a heart full of love, and you will not fail to interest and profit this large and impressible class of hearers.

It must not be overlooked that some men preach to children according to their capacity in every public congregation. The children are fed with the crumbs that fall from the adults' table. The habit of addressing a part of every sermon to children is successful with some preachers, while others still have a few words—a "sermonette"—for the children every Sunday morning, before proceeding with the regular sermon of the day. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. This all indicates the growing importance of this part of a minister's work. "Papa, are you going to say any thing to-day that I can understand?" asked a little girl of her father, as they were setting out for church one Sunday morning. This tender appeal touched the father's heart. He could not answer nay. He could not say, "No; you must sit in silent penance during all the long service, with never a word to interest or profit you." He thought about his own child, and the many other little ones whose

hungry souls waited in listless, restless, hopeless silence under his ministry. So as he preached that day he said, "And now, children, I will say something to you about this." Instantly the face of every child in that audience brightened—sleepy ones started up, tired ones were fresh to listen, and restless ones were all attention and eagerness for the message from the minister; and though the words were few and simple, they were eagerly grasped and comprehended, and both the minister and his theme were invested with new interest to the little ones.

"Papa, you used such big words to-day that I could not understand the sermon," said another little girl, on returning from church with her father. He tried to simplify his language for the pulpit ever after that.

The multitude of books and papers for children teeming from the press of every Christian country has given the Church a new language in which to preach the gospel; taught us the use and the value of illustrations in religious teaching; turned the hearts of the fathers to their children; made a distinct religious literature for our children; brought the Christ-life, through the gospel, into the child-life; com-

pelled the Church to recognize the child-life as the best type of the divine life; and made "the child in the midst" the most eloquent preacher of the present day—interpreting for us the life of Jesus, who said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

CHAPTER XI.

THE CONVERSION OF CHILDREN.

THE word of God teaches that the child is conceived in iniquity and born in sin.

Soon as we draw our infant breath,
The seeds of sin grow up for death.

Original sin "is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam." The doctrine of inherent depravity must first be accepted in all its fullness and force before the gospel of saving grace can be successfully preached to children. To tell children that they are naturally good is not only false and misleading, but it defeats the gospel. They are naturally bad; they are sinful by nature, and sinners by practice, as all their fathers

were before them. Let us not deceive them. It might please children to be told that they are all so good, and beautiful, and pure—that they are certain of heaven—but it would not profit them. It is not true; it is not the gospel. “There is none that doeth good; no, not one.” “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;” and if we tell children that they have no sin, we deceive them, and falsify Christ’s gospel. We must preach the same gospel to children that we preach to adults. If adults are “dead in trespasses and in sins,” so are children. We do not need the gospel in any sense in which our children do not need it. If all flesh has corrupted its way, and all the world is guilty before God, surely we can claim no exception for our children. If we are depraved, they are depraved; if we are lost in sin, they are lost in sin; if we must be born again, they must be born again, or they “cannot see the kingdom of God;” if we need to be created anew in Christ Jesus, so they must be new creatures in Christ Jesus; if we are “saved by grace, through faith,” they are saved in the same way; if we come to Christ by repentance and faith, they come to

Christ in no other way. We cannot preach one gospel to children, and another to adults. Let us cease our wranglings over the doctrine of depravity, and cover up our differences under the great fact that *religion is the only remedy for sin*, and we answer the many and foolish objections to the conversion of children. "Sin is the transgression of the law." The child comes into the world with a depraved nature, which inclines it to evil, and the child becomes a sinner so soon as it transgresses God's holy law; and, as a sinner, the child needs the saving grace of the gospel as any other sinner. Before the child breaks God's holy commandments, it is saved unconditionally—that is, without repentance and faith. It is redeemed by the blood of Christ from the guilt of Adam. After its own personal transgression, it is saved upon the terms of the gospel, just as any other sinner. But the repentance and faith which bring Christ into the heart of a little child may be incomprehensible to us, and that form of gospel truth which brings the child's heart to repentance and faith may be, and must be, as simple as the child's mind. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this

rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way"—in his child's way. That children are converted, "born again," and have an experience of grace, we cannot doubt who study the gospel. At what age? We cannot tell the youngest age, nor is it important that we should know. The fact that we cannot tell whether three, five, or seven years is the youngest age at which children may be converted, does not weaken the position here taken any more than does the other fact that children cannot comprehend all of the conditions and obligations of Christianity. No doubt there is a line at which the child reaches accountability, and meets the offered grace of the gospel. That line is not fixed by the age of the child, but by its mental and moral development. Some children reach it at an earlier age than others. An old preacher believes that he was savingly converted at three, and that the experience was as distinct as any part of his subsequent experience. A little girl, now ten years old, stood up in a meeting, and told of her conversion at five, and, when rigidly catechised before the audience, she said that she was under conviction for sin about a month, during which

time she was very unhappy; that she prayed earnestly for pardon, and when she knew and felt her sins forgiven she was happy, and had been at peace with God ever since. Her testimony was vivid and thrilling. A little girl began to pray at six, and at nine her experience was as satisfactory and mature as many adults at fifty. Yea, it was better, and sweeter, and richer. One of the saintliest ladies in the West will tell you of her conversion, at family prayers one morning, when she was seven. She was so happy that she clapped her hands, laughed, cried, shouted, and praised God. It was not during a revival, but in the regular family worship. A majority of the Christian people of to-day were converted in childhood, and yet many of the people who were themselves converted in childhood object now to the conversion of children, because some who were thus converted did not hold out. The same objection will lie against the conversion of adults. Parents who hinder their children from coming to Christ assume an awful responsibility. An old man, whose heart was supposed to be callous to all religious influences, heard his grandchild, seven years old, pleading with its mother for per-

mission to join the Church. The mother discouraged the child, and sent her away. No sooner had the child gone from its mother's presence than the old man turned to the mother, his own daughter, and, with tears in his eyes, said, "Don't you refuse to let the child join the Church at once." The woman was startled; she had never known her father to manifest any interest on that subject before. She barely had time to ask his reasons, when he said, with deep emotion: "My mother made that mistake with me. I wanted to join the Church, and become a Christian, when I was a little boy, but she refused me. How different my life might have been! Now, it is too late. That was the turning-point in my life, and I have been a very wicked man. I hope that God forgave my mother, for she thought it was for the best. Don't hinder your child." And the old man arose, and left the room. Fathers and mothers know not what they do when they keep their children from Him who said, "Suffer the *little* children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

No objection has ever been urged against the conversion of children that may not be

urged with equal force against the conversion of adults, while many plain and obvious reasons favor the conversion of children that cannot apply to adults. The wail of broken-hearted fathers and mothers, whose dissipated sons and ruined daughters are bringing their gray hairs down in sorrow to the grave, pleads more eloquently than tongue or pen for the conversion of children, and for their careful Christian training and nurture. Lay the foundations of Christianity in the susceptible young heart, and the possibilities of Christian character and usefulness in a long life of devotion and consecration to God are beyond all human computation. How rich and ripe the sheaves thus grown and garnered!

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHILD IN THE MIDST.

"COME, let us live for our children," is a suitable motto for this age, in which childhood is becoming the living text-book. The study of living childhood by the great minds of the Church is bringing us into a new and higher view of God's kingdom. So long as the disci-

ples ask, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" so long will Jesus keep "a little child sitting in the midst," to rebuke our worldly ambition, and teach us the simplicity, the purity, the sincerity, the humility, the faith, and the divine beauty of the kingdom of heaven in the character of a little child. The life of Jesus is translated for us through the character of this little child, and the words of Jesus are thrilling the whole Church with a divine eloquence, imparted to them by the purity and power of child-life, the counterpart of the Christ-life. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me."

It is worthy of note that the child which Jesus set in the midst of them, and made the highest model of the divine life, and the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, was a *little* child. "He took a LITTLE child;" "Except ye be converted, and become as *little* children;" "As this *little* child;" "One such *little* child;" "One of these *little* ones," etc. All through it

is a *little* child, not a big child. He said, "Suffer the *little* children to come unto me," "for *of such* is the kingdom of heaven." Shall we say that our children must be large and well-grown before we will suffer them to come to Jesus? He called the *little* children, and said, "*Of such* is the kingdom of heaven." "But they can't understand; wait until they grow in stature, and increase in knowledge, so that they can understand what they are doing." Who and what are we that we should instruct Jesus, and say to him, "You said, 'Suffer the *little* children to come unto me,' but we think the little children cannot understand it yet; we will suffer the larger ones to come?" What dangerous presumption!

George Macdonald calls attention to the words of Jesus spoken after placing the little child in the midst of the twelve—"Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me"—and says: "Pure childhood is a revelation of Christ, as Christ is the manifestation of God; that is, the child-like is the Christ-like; yea, more—it is the God-like." And in his poem "Within and Without," this favorite author

presents the same idea in Julian's words to his child:

My darling child, God's little daughter dressed
In human clothes, that light may be thus clad
In shining, so to reach my human eyes!
Come as a little Christ from heaven to earth,
To call me "*Father*," that my heart may know
What *Father* means, and turn its eyes to God.

Who will say that the study of child-life and child-culture in the Church of God, by which the kingdom of heaven has received a new and divine interpretation, is not due to the modern Sunday-school? "The child in the midst" is the teacher, the preacher, of to-day. With such a preacher, the heart of the Church will be tender and full of love; the life of the Church will be pure and without guile; the faith of the Church will be strong and unquestioning; the work of the Church will be done without strife for preferment; and the kingdom of heaven will become as a little child, and "the child shall die a hundred years old."

PART TWO.

CHAPTER I.

THE PASTOR'S PLACE IN THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

IF the Sunday-school and Church are one, then the pastor of the Church is the pastor of the Sunday-school; his office defines his place, and the word itself defines his office. "The word 'pastor' is derived from *pascere*, *pastum*, to pasture, to feed; and literally means a shepherd, one who has the care of flocks and herds." It means also "a minister of the gospel, having the charge of a church or congregation; one who has the care of souls." Rightly considered, the Sunday-school is the Church studying the word of God. Then, nowhere does the pastor's office more clearly define his place than in this pasture, where his flock are feeding on the "bread of life." He is the shepherd of the flock, to lead them into "green pastures," and "beside the still waters." The true pastor will fill this responsible place judiciously. It is the catechetical school of the Church, in which the doctrines and duties of

Christianity are taught from the Holy Scriptures, and the pastor is the authoritative head of the faculty of instruction. Himself taught of God, he is a teacher of teachers; a leader of the wise; an instructor of babes. No officious board of managers, superintendent, or association of teachers, can displace the pastor from his authoritative position as the official head of his church in this school, which he has organized under the law of the Church for the study of the word of God, without striking at the very source of authority from which they derive their existence. Let the pastor guard well, and maintain firmly, his place as the official head of the Sunday-school, as he that must give account; and let the Sunday-school see that the pastor receives all proper recognition and reverence.

CHAPTER II.

THE PASTOR'S OFFICE.

As the pastor's office defines his place in the Sunday-school, so his place defines his office. His office is that of a shepherd, a leader, a general superintendent, having the oversight of all

the work in all the school. He is officially related to every department, every officer and teacher, every class and member of the school, as the head over all. By the law of the Church, he is clothed with official authority in the school as its chief pastor and teacher. But his office comes from a source higher than the law of the Church; it inheres in his commission from God to preach and teach. His call to the office and work of the ministry implies and authorizes his official and pastoral ministry in the Sunday-school as well as in the public congregation. St. Paul says, "Inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine *office*." The true pastor will magnify his office wisely and well by exercising official supervision of the Sunday-school, not captiously, but discreetly—as one called of God, and commissioned to "feed the Church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." In no part of his official work can the pastor come so near to hearts that are more easily won to Christ. The Sunday-school should recognize the pastor's official relation to it by placing his name at the head of its roll of officers; by heeding his counsel, and yielding obedience to his authority in all matters involving the legitimate

work of the school. The cases are rare in which the pastor's authority should be interposed, but when necessity exists he should not hesitate. The sorest trial to a conscientious pastor is to sit still and witness the indolence and indifference of teachers, the inattention and impatience of classes, and the disorder and confusion permitted by the superintendent who has no discipline and substitutes scolding for authority.

CHAPTER III.

THE PASTOR'S OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS.

THE law of the Church defines the official functions of the preacher in charge to be: To organize Sunday-schools; to nominate superintendents; to report to the Quarterly Conference the number and state of the Sunday-schools; and, together with the Quarterly Conference, to have the general supervision of all the Sunday-schools in the bounds of his pastoral charge. The law thus defines, but does not limit, the functions of the pastor. The functions of the teacher, the preacher, the pastor, cannot be fully defined nor limited

by organic law. They refer to, and are derived from, the nature of his call and commission to preach the gospel and teach all nations. A wise discrimination of circumstances, and a judicious use of expedients must determine the exercise of his official functions in their practical application to his work rather than statutory law. Keeping in view the high object of the pastor's call and commission, we may discover a diviner meaning in the Sunday-school derived from the supreme object of its organization. The pastor organizes the Sunday-school the more efficiently to preach and teach the gospel. He appoints the superintendent to represent him and perform his official functions for the school, as an under-shepherd, to appoint teachers, and superintend their work for the pastor; he reports to the Quarterly Conference as from his own work, being officially responsible for the instruction given in the Sunday-school. Thus he employs others to act for him; he multiplies himself in the superintendent, teachers, and officers, the more efficiently to preach, and teach, and discharge the functions growing out of the official relation he sustains to "all the flock over to which the Holy Ghost hath made him over-

seer." From the stand-point of his call and commission, the pastor's functions cannot be defined away even by the refinement of distinctions without a difference.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PASTOR'S DUTY.

DUTY is obligation in action; and obligation comes of the relation of persons and things. Law may define, but cannot create, obligation. Moral obligation comes of the relation we sustain to God; has its foundation in our moral nature; is defined by moral law, and makes necessary a moral government. Hence moral obligation as such is absolute and unchangeable. It cannot be increased, or diminished, without a radical change in man's moral nature; and then it would revolutionize the moral government of God. A man's relation to the Church adds social to moral obligation; but his moral obligation is not increased by being in the Church, nor diminished by being out of the Church. It is one thing that is unalterably fixed. Now, this will help us to understand the pastor's duty in the Sunday-school. No moral

obligation as such is derived from his relation to the Sunday-school, but this relation brings him under the strongest personal and social obligation to the members of his Sunday-school; and the discharge of these obligations, to the best of his ability, is the measure of his duty. If the Sunday-school is doing his work, then it is his duty to be present during its sessions, as far as may be consistent with other duties, to supervise the work, and increase its efficiency. If the superintendent, officers, and teachers are, in any sense, his agents to do his work, and to multiply and modify himself in this specific function of teaching the gospel, then his responsibility in the matter is so great that his most vigilant and constant watch-care is required to meet it. He should know his agents and helpers—their character, qualifications, methods, and helps; and he cannot know them too well. It is a very sacred trust thus committed to them, and he is largely responsible for the character of their work. It is *their* work, as well as *his* work. They are co-workers with him, as he is with Christ, the Head of the Church. For this work, “all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or

things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

The truly wise and wide-awake pastor will not hesitate to levy upon all the agencies of the Church, and execute God's claim upon all of its resources of life and talent to do God's will and work. The economy of the Church lays this duty upon the pastor, and his success in the work depends largely upon his ability to organize and utilize the resources at his command. The successful pastor puts others to work under him upon organized methods, and makes the work efficient by the added force of his personal supervision and judicious direction. It is as difficult to define the multifarious duties of the pastor, growing out of his relation to the Sunday-school and Church, as it is to classify and characterize the special functions which officially emanate from the pastor, and are multiplied into the thousand-fold activities of a Church through its individual and organized lay workers.

If "duty is the sublimest word in the language," it is because it means more than any other word in the language. The pastor who measures its meaning by his own life and la-

bors will be "wise to win souls," and will "turn many to righteousness," and "shine as the stars forever and ever," *provided* that he also measure his life and labors by the meaning of this sublime word. Each laborer in the Lord's vineyard, we are taught by the parable, has his talent and his task; and his task is the measure of his talent. With two talents his task is double the task of one talent, and with five talents it is five times greater than with one. To each man according to his ability—his talent. When He calls the laborers, shall it be, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?"

CHAPTER V.

THE PASTOR'S WORK.

HE should not superintend the school. He should not teach a class. If there be no competent layman to fill the office of superintendent, he may fill the office until he can find one; or in the absence of the superintendent he may temporarily fill his place. He should be present with his counsel and help, and to do any extra and needed work for or with the

superintendent, such as to conduct the opening exercises occasionally, but not often; to review and apply the lesson at its close; and to see that the school is not talked to death by visitors—or himself. In many ways his presence and services may be helpful to the superintendent, and profitable to the school.

He should not teach a class—that is, he should not confine himself to one class as a regular teacher during the session of the Sunday-school. He may teach a class at some other hour, or he may occasionally take the place of an absent teacher, or for special reasons he may profitably teach a class now and then in the presence of the regular teacher; but he should always study the lesson, and be prepared to render ready and cheerful help to any teacher; he should know the character and qualifications of each teacher, the methods of teaching, the habits of study, the helps employed, and thus be prepared to make suggestions, remove difficulties, explain obscure passages in the lesson, and make himself familiar, agreeable, and pleasantly approachable to any and all persons in the school, so that teachers and pupils will feel and appreciate the loving presence of the pastor and his prayerful solici-

itude. He will thus be prepared to find out and suggest to the superintendent suitable persons for teachers, and otherwise to study the needs of the school, and help supply them; to aid, instruct, advise, admonish, and exhort, as occasion may require; to seek out and converse with the troubled and the penitent; and, without being obtrusive or offensively officious, prosecute successfully the work of the ministry in his personal contact with the school. His personal acquaintance with the children thus formed will not only aid his ministry to them, but will often open his way to the hearts and homes of strangers, and make his ministry a blessing to many. A pastor noticed a little girl, in the infant department, who was a stranger. He spoke to her; inquired her name and where she lived; learned that her parents were strangers; called to see them the next week; his attentions brought them to Church, interested them upon the subject of salvation, and soon resulted in the whole family becoming Christians. A pastor saw a strange lady enter the Sunday-school room; he approached her; welcomed her to the school; learned her name, and that she was visiting the several Sunday-schools of the city with a view of do-

ing good. He secured her as a teacher, and then as a member of his Church, and a more faithful and successful worker for the Lord was not to be found. Instead of superintending the school, or teaching a class, the pastor should be free to welcome strangers, and use his opportunities to the very best advantage, becoming, as far as possible, personally omnipresent; magnifying his office, and delivering himself with force and effect upon every class of his people. It is one thing for a pastor to sit up in a chair and look at his Sunday-school and be looked at as a figure-head, but it is quite another thing to be an earnest, active worker everywhere and all the time in his school, cultivating strangers, teachers, scholars, and officers, and infusing the glow of a warm heart, the sanctity of a holy life, and the inspiration of a divine commission to "Feed my lambs," "Feed my sheep," and "Feed the flock of God which he has purchased with his own blood." "Go, work to-day in my vineyard." This order is imperative. "To-day"—to-morrow may be too late. Evil habits are fastening themselves upon the young heart, and fixing the young life "in the way of evil men." To-morrow the soul may be lost. "My

vineyard" is the place, not outside of it; my vineyard is the Church; the Sunday-school is the Church. Go, work to-day in the Sunday-school. "*Go—work.*"

CHAPTER VI.

THE PASTOR AND THE CHILDREN.

"WILL you diligently instruct the children in every place?" is one of the ordination vows of every pastor. This evidently widens his work with the children beyond the precincts and sessions of the Sunday-school, and relates him to the children of every household in his pastoral charge, whether they be in the Sunday-school or not. In the law of the Church (Section II., page 122), the pastor's relation to children is thus set forth: "What directions are given concerning the children of the Church? *Ans.* 1. Let the minister diligently instruct and exhort all parents to dedicate their children to the Lord in baptism as early as convenient. *Ans.* 2. In his pastoral visitations let him pay special attention to the children; speak to them personally and kindly on experimental and practical godliness, according to their capacity," etc.

Under the modern notions of training children, the pastor finds the necessity for "Answer 1" increasing daily, and the duty enhancing to be still more diligent to "instruct and exhort parents to dedicate their children to the Lord in baptism." The pastor who does not see the growing tendency in the Church to neglect this important duty, and the corresponding necessity for his diligent instruction and exhortation, either closes his eyes to the facts or has an exceptional charge.

"Answer 2" is much more difficult to perform, owing to the altered conditions and usages of family-life; not only the difference between former years and now, but the differences of home-life and customs in the same community. The pastor rarely finds the children at home; they are either at school, or at work. When at home they are not usually in readiness to see the preacher. Mothers excuse the children, or delay the pastor unnecessarily to prepare them to make their appearance. The very best pastors have been so often defeated in their work among the children, in their homes, that they have been forced to adopt other methods of speaking to the children on "experimental and practical

godliness," and of instructing them "in the nature, design, privileges, and obligations of their baptism." And this may be a providential blessing by multiplying the pastoral instruction of children a hundred-fold.

Few pastors who love children, and who recognize their commission to preach the gospel to children to be equally binding with their commission to preach the gospel to adults, can be content with what they can do for them in their homes and in the Sunday-school. The pastor may get in a hasty word or two to a child at home, and then under conditions not favorable for lasting impression; but as a rule he must be content to draw the children nearer to him by his gentle and affectionate manner—win their confidence and love, and thus prepare the way for more profitable instruction elsewhere. This is now about the best performance of this pastoral duty that can be expected under the present variable conditions of family-life. The pastor of resources and expedients will provide for this exigency of his work, and may by so doing enhance the value of his ministry to the children. Indeed, he *must* do it; necessity is upon him, not only that he may fulfill his ministry to the chil-

dren, but that he may be prepared to perform the official duty for them and the Church prescribed by the law in "Answer 3" to the same question, viz.: "As soon as they comprehend the responsibilities involved in a public profession of faith in Christ, and give evidence of a sincere and earnest determination to discharge the same, see that they be duly recognized as members of the Church, agreeably to the provisions of the Discipline."

CHAPTER VII.

CATECHUMENS.

How to "bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" is not a modern question, nor does it grow out of the Sunday-school; but the Sunday-school has grown out of this question. The many phases of this question presented in the inspired word has given rise to many fancies and vagaries, concerning the relation of children to the Church, which the wisest men seem unable to remove. The modern Sunday-school is a wide departure from the primitive methods adopted by the Church, and, whether wise or otherwise,

will not be discussed in these pages. The contrast between the simple and severe methods of the primitive days and the present International Lesson Quarterlies, with their illustrated helps and multiform literature, may be sufficiently suggested by the following brief statement :

For many centuries, and by many Churches, papal and Protestant, children have been regarded as *catechumens*, and, as such, provisions were made for their catechetical instruction in the principles and precepts, the doctrines and duties, of Christianity. To aid in this work, the Church has provided and published innumerable "Question-books" and "Catechisms," some of which have been recognized as the basis of the doctrines and the embodiment of the creed of the Church. Catechisms are generally doctrinal, and the doctrines are often formulated in terms which children cannot understand, but upon which, in other years, they were principally raised. By dint of earnest and patient labor, the hard words grew into them, and the hard doctrines became assimilated with the first conditions of character, until it is noteworthy that the children who were raised on the hard catechism and cold

Sunday-dinners developed into the strongest, the grandest, and the highest Christian manhood. In those good old days, the question-books and catechisms formed the unchangeable basis of religious instruction—were used in the Sunday-schools, by pastors and parents, in the Church and around the fireside, and constituted the unvarying staple of study and thought for rich and poor, parent and child, out of which grew the religious life and the moral and social customs of the people. True, the Christian life formed upon the old Puritan catechism was very severe in its practical piety, and austere in its spirit; but better that than the lax morality and the licensed licentiousness of the present day. When the Rev. John Eliot, the great apostle to the Indians, was pastor of a Church in Roxbury, Mass., in 1674, he left this record: "In 1674, 6th, 10th month. This day we *restored a primitive practice* for ye training up of our youth"—and then described the assembling "every Sabbath, after morning service," of the children to be examined by the elders "in the catechism, and in whatever else may convene." In the same year "the Church in Norwich, Connecticut Colony," to check the "great de-

gree of dangerous neglects of that which ought to be for the prevention of apostasie," entered into a solemn covenant, the first clause of which was as follows: "That our children shall be brought up in the admonition of the Lord; as in our families, so *in publick*: that all the males who are eight or nine years of age shall be presented before the Lord in his congregation every Lord's-day to be catechised, until they be about thirteen years of age." From these facts we infer that more than two hundred years ago the New England Churches were trying to restore what they considered then "a primitive practice" of instructing children in the catechism, and recognizing the claims of "the child in the midst" to all the rights and privileges of a *catechumen* in the Church of God.

CHAPTER VIII.

PASTORAL INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN.

"Is there a written report of the number and state of the Sunday-schools, and of the *pastoral instruction of children*?" was once a question which the pastor had to answer in each Quarterly Conference of the Church. The ques-

tion was doubtless intended to cover the pastoral duties to children treated of in the preceding chapter, and implied other methods of instructing children than the usual Sunday-school methods. It was intended to obtain from the pastor an official statement of his personal pastoral instruction of children other than what he or any one else might do for them in the Sunday-school; supposing that every pastor would adopt some plan by which to instruct the children of his charge "in the nature, design, privileges, and obligations of their baptism." But, alas! too many pastors are content with what they and others can do in the Sunday-school and regular Church-service.

Many pastors have adopted the plan of forming the children into a Bible-class, over which the pastor presides, and which he meets at a convenient time and place, say Sunday or Saturday afternoon. Some make it the children's Bible-service. By this means they hope to store their minds and hearts with the treasures of God's word, and bring them to the knowledge and love of the same, and to an active participation in the public worship of the sanctuary. By recitative Bible-readings, and simple talks, and illustrations of the lesson,

they hope to stimulate them to "search the Scriptures," and "lay up the words of God in their heart, and in their soul, and to keep them in the midst of their heart." This is a good plan when conducted by good hands. Not every pastor can make it successful. It requires great diversity in the methods of conducting it, as do all other meetings conducted exclusively for children. What is called "a Sunday-school concert" has been adopted and extensively used in some parts of this country as a means of instructing children. When properly conducted, it is both flexible and fruitful. In some places it is a very popular religious service for the young, and awakens very general interest in the Church. Of its origin and history comparatively little is known, even to those who now successfully use it as a means of religious instruction. It perhaps originated in the custom of holding a monthly concert of prayer for Sunday-schools adopted by many Sunday-schools in the Eastern States more than half a century ago, and which was given a national prominence in September, 1824, through its recommendation by the Board of Managers of the American Sunday-school Union. As now conducted, the

name "Sunday-school concert" is a misnomer and misleading. It is more properly "the children's monthly meeting for worship," in which the pastor is brought face to face with "the child in the midst," preaches to him, and makes him the preacher of to-day, interpreting for us the kingdom of heaven through the heart and life of a little child. Some Churches have dropped the "concert" feature, and call it "Missionary Sunday," "Missionary Meeting," "Children's Day," "Children's Church," and by other similar titles, to describe the method adopted by the pastor for "the religious instruction of children" as a supplement to the work of the parent and the Sunday-school. The utility and propriety of such a service would not be questioned but for the latent heresy in the Church as to the religious capabilities of childhood—a heresy which placed the disciples between Jesus and the little children, and brought a divine rebuke upon those who would hinder them, and a rich revelation of the kingdom of God to the world in the familiar words, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God."

When we remember that the Church of the

future will be composed of the children now growing up in our Sunday-schools and families, the obligation upon the present pastors and Church to supply this claim of "the child in the midst" is imperative.

CHAPTER IX.

MY OWN PLAN.

I WAS never satisfied with the little work I could do for children in their homes and in the regular Sunday-school; nor have my ordinary pulpit ministrations been more satisfactory. I always loved children, and, in the early part of my ministry, my heart was much drawn out toward them as an interesting and impressible part of the Church and flock which I was commissioned to feed. Somehow I could not reach them in their homes without much embarrassment; and in the Sunday-school they were preoccupied. My conscience was ill at ease. What to do was a serious question. Many pastors have been troubled in conscience and embarrassed in work by the same facts and questions. After revolving the matter prayerfully and patiently, my mind settled

upon the following plan, and I proceeded to carry it out—*i. e.*, to organize the children into a distinct class for religious instruction, to meet every Saturday afternoon in the church. I made singing a conspicuous part of the exercises, with the organ accompaniment. At the first meeting I wrote down the name of each child, its age, residence, and whether baptized or not. When I did not know the facts I inquired about the religious *status* of the parents, and possessed myself of all the information I could about their religious advantages, inclinations, and habits. I required each child to know and repeat with me the Lord's Prayer at the opening of each service; to know and repeat with me the Apostles' Creed at the close of each service. My plan was to sing several songs while they were assembling, then stand and sing, kneel and pray, repeating the Lord's Prayer; then sing again, then talk to them familiarly about any thing that would interest them, and make them answer back—the weather, the day, the Church; tell about some sick child, or tell some incident from child-life, or a little, short, pleasant story, something that would interest and please them; then sing, then take up the lesson, reading from

the Scriptures a few passages bearing on the subject of the lesson, and proceed to catechise them in a familiar way, stopping now and then for a song, and never keeping them over an hour.

When the class is first organized, and for several succeeding meetings, I make the Ten Commandments the basis and body of instruction, until the children become so familiar with them that they can repeat them by number forward and backward and skipping as fast as the numbers can be called. I do not require them to repeat the reasons, the promises, the particulars, or the penalties annexed to any of the commandments. They must know them; but in this catechism it is best not to repeat more than the briefest form of the commandment, thus:

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.
5. Honor thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

8. Thou shalt not steal.

9. Thou shalt not bear false witness.

10. Thou shalt not covet.

This form of the commandments is simple, and easy to be remembered by small children. I teach them the history, nature, and design of the commandments, how to keep them, and what it is to break them, and illustrate the lesson by every-day incidents from child-life. For instance, I begin with the question:

“What is sin?”

Answer. “The transgression of the law of God.”

I give them this answer, and make them repeat it over and over until they not only know it, but until it becomes inwrought into their very being, and they can never forget it. The next question is:

“What is a Christian?”

Answer. “One who loves God, and keeps his commandments.”

This question and answer are repeated in the same way, and to the same extent of familiarity. I then proceed about after the following form:

“Suppose I say I love God, and yet break his commandments, am I a Christian?”

"No, sir."

"Suppose Johnny should say that he loves Jesus, and yet he goes fishing on Sunday, does he break any commandment?"

"Yes, sir."

"Which?"

"The fourth."

"What is the fourth?"

"Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy."

"Well, what is sin?"

"The transgression of the law of God."

"You see, then, how that Johnny commits sin and becomes a sinner."

"What is a Christian?"

"One who loves God, and keeps his commandments."

"Charley, with books and lunch, started for school one morning at the usual hour, but he got with some bad boys, and instead of going to school he staid out and played all day. At the usual time for school to close he slipped home, threw down his books, and went off to play as if he had been studying hard all day, even forgetting to kiss his mother. What do you call that kind of conduct, boys?"

"Playing 'truant,' 'hookey.'"

"What?"

“‘Truant,’ ‘hookey.’”

“Well, now, let’s see: Charlie had a good day, you think; lots of fun, did he?”

“Do n’t know.” “No, sir.”

“No, you do n’t know. But now tell me, how many commandments did he break?”

“Two.”

“Which two?”

“The fifth and ninth.”

“What is the fifth?”

“Honor thy father and thy mother.”

“What is the ninth?”

“Thou shalt not bear false witness.”

“Yes; but Charley did not say that he had been to school.”

“No; but he *acted* it.”

“Then, a boy can act a falsehood without saying a word, can he?”

“Yes, sir.”

“How many sins did Charley commit that day?”

“Two.” “Do n’t know.”

“No, you do n’t know; but we know that he broke two commandments; and any boy who will play ‘hookey’ will be apt to say bad words, and do many other bad things. You see, now, how easy it is to break God’s holy com-

mandments, and how you can tell the good or bad of every thing you do by the commandments."

"What is sin?"

"The transgression of the law of God." O

"What is a Christian?"

"One who loves God, and keeps his commandments."

"Sing."

This is a sample of the way I take children through the commandments. In the same way we go through the Apostles' Creed, the life of Jesus, and into the life of faith and love, with a profusion of songs and stories from child-life; and many of them grow up to be the best Christians in the Church.

I began this method of religious instruction in Kansas City, Mo., in 1861; then in Independence, Mo., in 1862. I began again in St. Joseph in 1865, and continued till 1868; then in Hannibal, in 1869; in St. Charles, in 1870; and First Church, St. Louis, in 1871. It is not too much to say that hundreds of children were brought to Christ and into the Church by this means. Many of them are bright and shining lights; some are preachers, and some are preachers' wives, and some have fallen on

sleep. I expect to meet a host of them beyond the "pearly gates," and see them in that beautiful world, "safe in the arms of His infinite love."

CHAPTER X.

THE CHILDREN'S CLASS.

My first object was to organize the baptized children of the Church into a class convenient for religious instruction and recognize them as *catechumens*. This was the only feasible plan that I could adopt to meet the special claims of the children upon pastoral instruction; and if my ministry has been successful with any one class of people more than another, it has been successful with the children in bringing them to Christ and into the experience and practice of a Christian life.

With the class of children organized and interested, the pastor has opportunities of usefulness measured only by the possibilities of childhood; but his success will largely depend upon his ability to understand the conditions, the aptitudes, and the daily habits of childhood. The study of child-nature, child-life, child-thought, child-feelings, and child-want,

as comprehended in the word *childhood*, will be the most deeply interesting text-book of the pastor's life, which he can study successfully only out of his own heart. Some truths are reasoned out, and some truths are felt out. So of some natures. One may reason of childhood never so wisely and well, but he can understand childhood only through his own heart. The man who can bring his mind to the level of a child's mind may "speak as a child, understand as a child, and think as a child;" but the man whose heart is in sympathy with the child's heart, who enters into a child's feelings, is touched with its grief, moved by its tears, and thrilled with its joys, and whose nature is warmly responsive to all the changing phases of the child's nature, will not only understand and appreciate childhood, but, reaching the child's nature through his own sympathies, he can win the child's heart to himself, lead the child to Christ, and mold its plastic nature into the likeness and image of Him who took a little child and set him in the midst of his disciples, and through him translated for us the kingdom of heaven. Place such a man in the relation of pastor to children, let him organize them into a class for religious instruction, and he

will become as a little child and bring the Christ-life into the child-life, and make this work with children the sweetest part of his ministry. Looking back over a ministry of more than twenty-five years, it is cold and tame to say that my work with the children is the richest, the sweetest, and the divinest, in its ministries upon my own heart and life. It is the flower-garden of God's life and love blossoming out in child-life and love, shedding the sweetest perfumes of innocence and purity upon my heart, and with happy faces and changeful forms making bright and beautiful the long, hard years of toil in the Master's vineyard.

The children's class affords the pastor the opportunity of child-culture in manners as well as morals. The stories taken from child-life may often be turned to good account in correcting the bad habits of boys and girls in the play-house, on the play-ground, at home, and abroad. The principles and precepts of Christianity may be thus inwrought with the earliest sentiments and habits of children, so that Christianity will become not only the foundation of moral character, but also the educating force in the every-day social and domestic life

of the people. But while this may be important in its place, the children's class will fall short of its highest and best design if it does not do for the children what the class-meeting does for adults—cultivate the grace and growth of Christian experience. If the pastor, with discretion, will sometimes hold a regular class-meeting with the children, question them one by one about their "state," inquire simply for their experience in grace, using terms which they can understand, he will not only know how they do, but will often find the most touching and satisfactory experiences of grace in conversion and help in trouble that he ever heard. Four little children one day in their play said, "Let's play Church." All agreed, and they soon arranged which one should preach, which should read, which should pray, and that all should sing. When they kneeled down to pray, one little girl began to cry and sob like her heart would break, and then another. The mother called the first one that cried to her and asked, "What is the matter, my child?" The little girl sobbed out, "O I am such a sinner!" The Christian mother thought awhile, and then discerned the Spirit of God upon the hearts of her children. She

called them to her, talked with them only as a mother can, prayed for them, and the next Sunday presented them to the pastor for membership in the Church, feeling assured that they were converted to Christ.

When the children of my class give evidence of a "desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins," I take their names as candidates for membership in the Church, just as I do adults. With the consent of their parents, I take them under very careful training for that important step. I explain the nature of the vows, question them about their experience and habits, teach them the way of life more perfectly; and when I am satisfied that they are proper subjects, I bring them before the congregation and receive them into the Church in due form, as I do any other candidates.

A few weeks since I had a class of sixteen children, their ages ranging from eight to fifteen. After the children's service Sunday afternoon, I took them into my study, explained to them the nature of the vows, and then sent all but one out of the room so that the presence of others could not influence the examination, and I asked that one, and then the others, about

these questions: "Why do you desire to join the Church?" "Why do you desire to be a Christian?" "Did you ever feel that you are a sinner—feel guilty before God?" "Did you pray to Jesus?" "Did he forgive your sins?" "How do you know?" "Did he change your heart so that you love him better than every thing else?" "Do you hate any one?" "What do you do when you sin?" "Why do you believe that he does forgive?" These and similar questions called out each child's experience. They were formally received into the Church the next Sunday.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CO-OPERATION OF PARENTS.

IN this work the pastor must have the cordial co-operation of the parents. Without the aid of parental authority and the supporting sympathy of the home-life, the pastor will have an uphill business of it. While the exercises of the children's class should be made as attractive and pleasant as possible to the children themselves, yet if children see that their parents do not approve of it, are indifferent to it,

and have little or no sympathy with it, no pastor can long hold the children, unless it be in exceptional cases. Sometimes the child's interest will overcome all adverse influences, even to positive opposition. But this fact, as an exception to the rule, only proves more strongly the value of hearty and cordial co-operation upon the part of parents. Rightly considered, the pastor's work with the children is only a valuable co-operation with the parents in the work of training their children in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." No pastor, no teacher, no Sunday-school, no church, can take the place of the parent in this work, and meet the parent's obligation to train his child for God and heaven. They may all help the parent, but they cannot take his place.

In the beginning of this work for the children, in any pastoral charge, I always explain my plan and purposes to the congregation, appoint a meeting for the children, invite the presence and invoke the aid of all the parents. The meetings are generally well attended by grown people, and not unfrequently they are pronounced the most interesting and profitable services of the Church. Rarely do parents become offended and withdraw their children;

when they do, it is usually because they do not attend the meetings, but listen to perverted statements of mischief-makers who prefer evil to good. Even this has not occurred more than once in a ministry of over twenty-five years. I state this fact as an evidence of the general approval of the plan and methods of religious instruction which have been so successful in the salvation of children. Some plan for the special instruction of children was adopted and practiced by the Church in the days of the apostles, and continued through all the early ages of the Church. Parents sought the help of the Church, and the Church, seeing "the child in the midst," appointed deacons, or other suitable persons, to assist the pastors in the religious instruction of the children of the congregation. These assistant teachers were called *catechists*, from which we have the word *catechism*; and the children so instructed were called *catechumens*. This work of instructing the children was done apart from the congregation, in a separate room, and at a different time. Where the number of children was large, several catechists were appointed to take charge of their instruction, with the pastor, or some experienced catechist, to superintend

them. Clement was such a superintendent at Alexandria, in Egypt; and possibly Gaius at Derbe, Aristarchus at Thessalonica, and others who are set down as helpers of the apostles. Here is the modern Sunday-school idea growing out of the custom of the Apostolic Church in catechising children, which custom was revived by the reformers of the sixteenth century, and which Luther considered to be of equal value with preaching the gospel. He says: "Next to preaching, teaching is the greatest, and best, and most useful vocation; and I am not quite sure which of the two is the better, for it is hard to reform old sinners, with whom the preacher has to do, while the young can be made to bend without breaking." Surely, the parent's obligation to provide for this work, as well as to co-operate with the pastor, is equal to his responsibility for the character of his child, and to the possibilities of good to the character, conduct, and destiny of his child. The salvation of the children and the future of the Church are involved in this particular work, whether it be done in the regular Sunday-school, in the plan of catechising children in classes, in special children's service, or in the family. In all or in some of

these ways, *it must be done.* Better in all of them.

The general neglect of this important work in the family, and the substitution of a loose family government for the old-time catechetical instruction of children, appeal with ever-increasing voice to the pastors and parents who are alive to this work.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL AND ITS METHODS.

THE methods adopted by the Sunday-schools of the present day can be discussed in this little work only so far as they are made to substitute the parental and pastoral instruction of children. As elsewhere stated, the Sunday-school and its methods were never intended to take the place of the parent, nor to do the work of the pastor. Sunday-school methods must of necessity be very general in the preparation, study, and application of the lesson, leaving the element of personal religion largely to the teacher, and never taking that feature of religious instruction from the parent and the pastor. In view of this element of personal

religion, who teaches your children? Some one who can read off the printed questions, and hear the children read off the printed answers? Is that all? It is something, just as it is something for a child to attend Sunday-school and do nothing but look on. Better that than not be there at all. But does it meet the obligations of religious instruction? How much of truth, of Christ, of God, will be formed in the child's consciousness and character by this method? Nor is this kind of teaching so rare in our Sunday-schools as some suppose. It is sufficiently common to demand the attention of parents and pastors, especially those who are depending upon the Sunday-school for the religious instruction of their children. The teacher may not be a Christian at all, and can neither feel the highest obligation nor perform the highest functions of a teacher. Does this possibility awaken any serious concern in the hearts of the parents who have turned over the religious instruction and nurture of their children to the Sunday-school? If not, why not? Should not parents be interested enough in a work which involves the vital interests of their children, for time and eternity, to inquire into the character and qualifications of those

to whom this work is committed? There is utterly a fault here, fatal and far-reaching. Not one fault, but many. The man who will ride four miles to his farm three times a week to look after his fine colts, and will not go three blocks to the day-school once a year, nor two blocks to the Sunday-school, to look after his children, how they are growing in knowledge and in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord," may try to relieve his conscience by the playful jest on the comparative value of children and colts, but the obligation remains the same, and the character of his children will be formed upon his neglect that may tell disastrously upon his destiny and theirs.

As a means of religious instruction for children it may be gravely questioned whether the present system of preparing the Sunday-school lesson could not be improved. The selection of lessons under a rigid international lesson system, and the great profits derived from the Sunday-school publications which grow out of the system, and seem to form a necessary part of it, may, and perhaps do, favor the dilution of saving truth, and the shilly-shally preparation of the lessons which liberalizes Christ out of his gospel and personal, practical relig-

ion out of the Sunday-school. The system is responsible for these evils, rather than the men who work it. And yet the modern Sunday-school methods which have grown out of the international system have accomplished so much good, and in so many ways, that the evils referred to, serious as they are, may be charged to the abuses of the system and its perversion to the money-loving and money-getting designs of some who have taken advantage of it for their own gains. Bad men can deprave the best systems, corrupt even the Church of God, and deceive the very elect. But those of us who are mainly concerned for the religious training of children and the spiritual life of the Church, cannot be indifferent to the abuses of a system which substitutes husks for food and sillabub for the bread of life. Never before has the Church so earnestly demanded a pure, strong gospel from the pulpit, and the direct, pointed, personal, practical gospel taught in the Sunday-school. Clement said, "A good life is begun in catechising." But the catechism must be good to start with, and the spiritual food upon which the character is to grow and enlarge for future usefulness must be pure, good,

and strong. A pure, practical Sunday-school literature is much easier to prepare than the lesson-papers for the teachers and classes. This work is much like Christian growth—ever approximating but never reaching perfection. Both the lesson system and the methods of preparing the lessons may be improved in the future.

CHAPTER XIII.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL LITERATURE.

“THE child in the midst” has influenced modern literature more than has the telegraph. Half a century ago there were not half a dozen children’s books known to the reading-public; now a collection of books for children would make the largest library in the world. Outside of the Bible, ancient history rarely mentions the influence and deeds of childhood. From Herodotus, Berosus, Xenophon, and Tacitus, the world would scarcely know that there were such beings as children in those days. Where are the lines about children in Homer and Virgil? How much of the ethics of Confucius, Socrates, and Plato, are founded

in childhood, and applicable to child-life? Plato wrote about childhood, but not to children. He noticed them because they will come to be men and women. Confucius teaches great reverence for motherhood, but few precepts for childhood. The artists and poets of earlier days had little use for children. Murillo, among the old masters, was the only artist of his day who made childhood a prominent subject for his brush. His "St. John" is said to be an ideal Childhood, and his "Beggar-boys" are famous for being true to Boy-life. Shakespeare, the *primus* of English poetry, has only one well-developed boy-character, and Milton had no use for children. Amid the multitude of characters in the romances of Swift, Fielding, De Foe, and Sir Walter Scott, scarcely a little face appears; while the greatest poets and novelists of our day brighten their ideal world and homes with as many happy little faces as are in our real homes.

Christianity, as interpreted to us in the child-life of Jesus, and represented in the sacred history, poetry, and ethics of the Bible, has wrought this wonderful change in the popular literature of the day, and flooded the

world with a distinct literature for children, in books, magazines, papers, and paragraphs, equal to the literature for any other class. No fact of the present day is more significant of progress toward a higher civilization, and a purer Christianity. Our age is studying Christianity in the child-life of Joseph, and Moses, and David, and Samuel, and Jesus, and John, and Timothy, and "the child in the midst" all through the Old and the New Testament history, until our thoughts and theories, our language and literature, grow out of this simpler and intenser view of the kingdom of God. We have learned that childhood is an element not to be left out of the structure of society, nor to be ignored by our literature, nor to be excluded from the kingdom of heaven.

While Christianity as preached to us by a little child has made necessary a distinct literature, it has done another service for the world, indirectly in this line, which will never be fully appreciated. In Sparta and other Greek cities, in pagan Rome, and among many savage tribes, it was a common custom to destroy small, deformed, and unhealthy children as soon as they were born. This horrible custom is practiced now in many heathen lands

where Christ is not named and known; but Christianity put a stop to the barbarism, and saved to the world many of its brightest lights and greatest geniuses. Spinoza was frail; Malebranche, deformed; Byron, club-footed; Akenside, halting; Sam. Johnson, disfigured; Sir Walter Scott, "a pining child;" Sir Isaac Newton could have been put into a quart-cup; Voltaire was too small to be christened; Goethe, Victor Hugo, and D'Alembert, were so weak at birth that they were not expected to live; Charles Sumner weighed but three pounds and a-half; Pope, Descartes, Gibbon, Kepler, Lord Nelson, Wren, Watt, Howard, Irving, Wilberforce, and many others who rose to greatness and renown in literature, science, philosophy, and philanthropy, were of such bodily weakness in infancy as would have marked them in any but a Christian land as unworthy to be raised to manhood. Burton, in his "Anatomy of Melancholy," says, "How many deformed princes, philosophers, and orators could I reckon up!"

The wonderful success of a distinct literature for children has created a *mania* for child-stories not altogether healthful to morals and religion. Among the greatest of the many

things is the "dime novel." It is destructive of moral principle, personal purity, and good character; it is the bane of modern literature, and ought to be legislated out of existence along with obscene pictures. Many of the illustrated monthlies, weeklies, and story-books have the same tendencies as the dime novel, but in a modified form. These evils increase the necessity for a sound, healthy Sunday-school literature. In this age boys and girls will read. If we do not furnish them good books, they will get bad books; if we do not supply them with religious literature, they will supply themselves with immoral literature. Indeed, where the taste is so easily and quickly vitiated, eternal vigilance is the price of purity. Pastors and parents should keep a severe surveillance upon Sunday-school libraries and literature, and admit no moral poison, under any disguise, to the minds of children through *that* channel. If the tastes of our children must be depraved, and their consciences debauched by vicious publications, let us see to it that it is not done through the "catechetical and theological school of the Church." Some years ago the attention of the Church was aroused to the possibilities of

untold evils from this quarter, and now for the past several years the tone of Sunday-school books and papers has perceptibly improved. Let the vigilance of the Church, and the purity and power of childhood, demand greater improvement still, until our children shall have a pure literature in a pure language.

PART THREE.

CHAPTER I.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL CONVENTIONS.

“THE child in the midst” has called the Sunday-school workers of every Christian country together, and organized them into conventions for mutual counsel and help. This is a modern movement of marvelous utility. Conventions, or conferences, of those engaged actively in this work have stimulated, organized, and extended the work of Sunday-schools, and developed plans for the religious instruction of children, as much as any other agency, if not more. The greatest and the best men of Europe and America have recognized their utility, and contributed of their presence and services to their success. When two men who are engaged in the same work, and animated by the same object, meet together and talk over their plans and purposes, explain their methods, speak of their difficulties and their successes, and each makes the experience of

the other his own property, it is a conference, or convention, by which both are benefited, and in which suggestions are made and plans formed for more efficient work in the future. Men recognize this principle of mutual help in every business, and in every department of life; and nowhere has it been more successful than in the Sunday-school work of this country.

More than fifty years ago the Sunday-school concert suggested union mass-meetings; these meetings called local conventions of active workers for the discussion of plans, the comparison of methods, and for mutual counsel and help. The local convention gave such additional interest and inspiration to the work that county conventions were called; then State, then national, then international conventions were formed; and through these conventions States, counties, townships, and civil districts have been organized for more general and efficient work among the children and the destitute communities. The American Sunday-school Union led off in this work of organization, and the leading Sunday-school men of all the Churches fell into line and coöperated so efficiently that the organization of the Sun-

day-school work through conventions has almost swallowed up the American Sunday-school Union, and put the Sunday-school work upon a broader and higher basis even than that great union organization—not that the American Sunday-school Union has been destroyed, or made less efficient, but that it has become only a factor in this more extended and more general organization. Local Churches and large denominations, which would not coöperate with the American Sunday-school Union except under protest, either expressed or implied, have gone into these Sunday-school conventions, and become the most aggressive factors in them. The standing excuse for keeping out of them—that each denomination can best do its own work in its own way—has been swept away by the rising tide of coöperative power generated in the great international conventions, and crystalized into the international lesson system sent down to the Sunday-schools of all the Christian world. It is an organized power, which concentrates the ripest knowledge of all the wisest workers of Christendom, and transmits it to the most obscure Sunday-school of the land in proper form, prepared to suit their capacity and their

denominational inclinations. These conventions have not only given us the benefit of the international system of lessons, but the multi-form helps that have grown out of it in the form of quarterlies, commentaries, magazines, lesson-papers, object-lessons, illustrations, lesson-notes, books and Sunday-school papers without number, which constitute a distinct literature, growing out of the international lesson system, and reaching every Sunday-school in Christendom. This distinct literature, from the international lesson to the simplest sheets for the smallest children, prepared by the Sunday-school department of each Church, may become as distinctly denominational as that Church may desire, or may be as undenominational as those who prepare it may elect.

To say that the system of conventions has accomplished only this much for the Sunday-school cause, would be saying a great deal, but not as much as can truthfully be said for them. They have sent agents into the field to organize Sunday-schools in destitute places, directed, and supported them, thus doing the most important and profitable missionary evils that have grown out of this new order of

work; and this, too, without interfering with denominational work. They stimulate denominational work in the home mission-field. They have brought the various denominations closer together, kindled a warmer Christian feeling, promoted Christian fellowship and mutual co-operation to such an extent as either to destroy or greatly modify the sectarian spirit of the Churches, and fuse the great Christian heart into a sacred unity which will make Christianity irresistible for the conversion of the world. Men who are not insensible to these beneficial effects are still blinded as to the cause. Prejudices yield only at the last ditch; and they are too blind to see the ditch until they are plunged headlong into it. The man who still holds out against Sunday-school conventions presents a curious mental phenomenon; and the Church which cuts itself off from the inspiration, the expansion, and the coöperative power derived from them, may gain distinction for exclusiveness, and boast of its independence, but it will be left high and dry in the paltry splendor of artificial righteousness, or be relegated to the custody of future archæologists. The world moves; the activities of the Church demand the widest and the

wisest agencies for its ever-enlarging work, and personal and sectarian prejudices must get out of the way, or be ground to powder.

CHAPTER II.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL CONFERENCES.

THE term "Conference" has become almost exclusively Methodist. It means "to consult together, confer," to interchange views, examine things by comparison, and transact business by conference. The term has by usage, become the property of Methodism, other Churches and other bodies giving us almost the exclusive use of it. The term "Convention" has, in this country, a political significance by its long use in designating political meetings. It also describes a body composed of delegates from subordinate bodies representing a constituency. Long usage, rather than any law, has thus differentiated the terms "Convention" and "Conference," giving to one a secular meaning, and to the other an ecclesiastical meaning. Some Churches still retain the word "Convention" to describe their highest ecclesiastical tribunals, or assemblies; but

the Methodists have appropriated the term "Conference," and forever settled their proprietary claim to it by its use, after discussion, to describe the great Ecumenical *Conference*. Henceforth let the term be used to designate every assembly of our people for *conference* about Church-work. Instead of Sunday-school Conventions, we have Sunday-school Conferences.

If Sunday-school Conventions have resulted in good to the cause, as shown in the foregoing chapter, our Church and our Sunday-school work has largely shared in that good. And while many of our preachers and churches have declined to go into them, the whole Church has derived the benefit of them, by adopting the international lessons, by representation on the international committee to select the lessons, by representation in the international conventions, and by receiving the pulsations of its quickened life, and the expansion of its grander movement throughout the world. No Church can grow so wise and great that it may not be benefited by keeping itself in active sympathy with the general work of united Christendom, whether it be for Sunday-schools, missions, or general evangelization.

While all this and more is true, yet there is a sense in which we have not been as wise and as enterprising as we might have been. Our Sunday-school work is not perfect. In many places our schools are imperfectly organized and inefficiently operated. In some places we have no school at all, and the poor have not the gospel preached unto them. Our Sunday-school literature is not universally used in our schools, and our best methods of organizing and conducting schools are unknown to many of our people. The best helps for officers and teachers, the best plans of study, and methods of teaching, the supreme object of all, and the proper discipline, spirit, and inspiration of the work, with the experiences, observations, and suggestions of the active workers in this great vineyard, all need to be discussed, compared, and utilized to the fullest and farthest extent, that the whole Church may reap the benefit in the more perfect organization and work of this department. How can this be done? By organizing a system of Sunday-school Conferences, that the active workers may confer together, compare, discuss, plan, enlarge, and vitalize the whole work, give a more general application to that which is good, and utilize

to the fullest extent the experience, the wisdom, the helps, and the accessories that may contribute the more largely and efficiently to the general result. If Conferences for Church-work are useful, may not Conferences for Sunday-school work be useful also? If we must have General, Annual, District, Quarterly, and Church Conferences for Church-work, why not for Sunday-school work? True, we have committees on Sunday-schools at these Church Conferences, reports from Sunday-schools, and resolutions on Sunday-schools, but for the most part these committees hunt up statistics, report the mathematics, resolve about the literature, and the Conference adjourns feeling that the Sunday-school cause has been looked into. Under this treatment the Sunday-school work of our Church can never reach a perfect organization, nor a high degree of efficiency. In connection with Annual and District Conferences especially, we should hold Annual and District Sunday-school Conferences, to promote the great object of Sunday-school work by a more perfect organization of Sunday-schools in the bounds of the Annual and District Conferences; to provide help for destitute places; to suggest methods for the organiza-

tion, conduct, and discipline of schools; to discuss Sunday-school literature and other helps, and how to use them; to apply the best methods of study and teaching to all the schools; to keep before the Church the distinctive objects of all Sunday-school work; to discuss the character, qualifications, and functions of superintendents, officers, and teachers; to interest more the officers and active men of the Church in the Sunday-school work, and to infuse greater zeal and activity in this cause all through the Church. Many other interests might be discussed, and many other objects gained by holding these Conferences that could not be reached in any other way. The details of Sunday-school work are never touched in the Annual Conference, and the best Sunday-school talent of the Church is rarely heard or felt in the councils of an Annual Conference. Our plan of lay representation in the Conferences has brought to the surface and utilized enough of this lay wisdom to convince the thoughtful that the talent hid away in napkins, or utilized only in a small way and to a limited extent, is really much greater than that which has been developed. Here and there in an Annual Conference we have a conspicuous

Sunday-school worker in the councils of the Church, when we might have hundreds in each Annual Conference if we knew how to bring them up and out into the full light and liberty of the highest usefulness. Is the Church responsible for its undeveloped talent?

CHAPTER III.

ANNUAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL CONFERENCE.

THE Annual Sunday-school Conference should be held in connection with the Annual Conference, at the same time and place. Its deliberations should require at least one day and night, to be called "Sunday-school Day." It should be composed of all the members of the Annual Conference, and such others as the Conference Board may invite to participate in its deliberations. A programme of subjects for discussion should be previously prepared by the Sunday-school Board, and each subject, or topic, given out to some man before the session of the Conference, that the speaker may have ample time to give the Conference his maturest thoughts on the subject. In every other respect the session should be con-

ducted as the session of the Annual Conference is conducted, with the Bishop, or some one selected by him, in the chair; and the action of this Sunday-school Conference should be the action of the Annual Conference on the subject of Sunday-schools: *provided*, that the appointment of a member of the Annual Conference to be Sunday-school agent, or secretary, and any other action affecting the work of a member of the Annual Conference, should be reported to the Annual Conference for its concurrence. Any one can see how that the discussion of topics, and the deliberations of the whole Annual Conference, and others that might be brought in, for a whole day, closing up at night with a Sunday-school mass-meeting, or something of the sort, would, in a short while, develop and perfect the Sunday-school work, and give new life to all of its operations. In no way could such a Conference accomplish more good, perhaps, than by devising ways and means for the organization and support of Sunday-schools in the destitute parts of the Conference. Preachers having charge of missions, circuits, stations, and districts cannot always do this work. If they could, and would, there would be no destitution. But the

fact that many places, embracing large areas of country, and large numbers of people, have no Sunday-schools and no churches, is conclusive that the regular pastors cannot always and everywhere supply all the people with the gospel. Besides, this is mission-work, and must be provided for as such. How does the American Sunday-school Union provide for this kind of work? By appointing agents to do it, and supplying the means of helping the schools organized by their agents, and keeping them going until they become self-supporting. They often use the men and means belonging to our Church to do their work, while we stand by and say to them, We cannot do this work, but we will furnish you the men and means, and fuss at you all the time you are doing it. The American Sunday-school Union can do no work for our people that we cannot do, and that we will not do, when we begin to bring the necessity for it home to our hearts in the discussions of a Sunday-school Conference. Why should our Church not preöccupy all the mission-fields within our territory, and reclaim all the waste-places for Jesus? Others will plant Sunday-schools in these places, if we do not, and will cultivate the field up to

our very line, and would be glad even to enter into our heritage. If we do not occupy the ground, they will, and they ought. We have recognized the Sunday-school as the wisest and best means of establishing missions for the destitute. In our cities we first gather the people together and organize them into a Sunday-school, and in this way begin the mission-work among the destitute. Out of the Sunday-school will grow the prayer-meeting, the occasional preaching, the organization of a society, and then the Church, with a local congregation and a pastor. In this way our home missions are started, and upon this plan and by this process they grow into self-sustaining churches. This kind of work would bring the Sunday-school back to its original purpose, without abating in the least its great work in established churches as the Bible-school of the Church. If the mission-work is essential to the life of the Church, it is also essential to the life of the Sunday-school, for the Church and the Sunday-school are one. Let the Conference take sufficient time to discuss the Sunday-school work in its bounds, and not only will the missionary character of Sunday-schools appear more fully, but the value of

Sunday-schools, as a missionary agency and pioneer of the Church, will assume a prominence unknown before.

In addition to the missionary feature of Sunday-schools, and their efficiency in reaching the destitute with the gospel, the Sunday-school Conference might discuss with great profit the character of our literature, and suggest, after careful and critical thought, any changes in the present forms, style, and adaptation of our Sunday-school publications. For instance, put the *Magazine* into the hands of a competent man, and let him very carefully prepare a paper on the character and quality of the *Magazine*, and its adaptation to the purposes for which it is published, criticising its matter, its make-up, its style, and suggesting any changes that would improve it, enlarge it, and increase its usefulness. So of the *Quarterly*, the *Visitor*, *Our Little People*, and every other publication for the current use of our Sunday-schools. Men can be found in each Conference fully competent to this task, who understand the functions of legitimate criticism, and would use it to great advantage. Such papers, read and discussed in each Annual Sunday-school Conference of the Church,

would not only be helpful to the editor and agent by way of suggestions, but might become the property of the Sunday-school Department, and make an annual volume of great value to the Church. By such discussion the value of our literature would be better known, its claims recognized, its circulation extended, its defects pointed out, its errors corrected, changes and additions suggested that would be of great value to this important department of Church-work. Our *Advocates* and *Methodists* uniformly commend the Sunday-school literature without exceptional criticism. Is the literature that emanates from our Sunday-school Department so perfect? Neither the editor nor the publisher thinks so. Discriminating criticism is helpful: let us have it. Discussion is healthful: let us have more of it. Give us the Annual Sunday-school Conference

CHAPTER IV.

DISTRICT SUNDAY-SCHOOL CONFERENCE.

THE District Sunday-school Conference should meet at the same time and place with the District Conference. It should be composed of

all the members of the District Conference, and such others as the presiding elder of the district, or the committee may call into the service of the Conference. Sufficient time should be allowed for the Sunday-school Conference to overhaul and thoroughly discuss every interest of the Sunday-school work in the bounds of the district. Let a programme of topics be prepared, and each topic be given out beforehand to some one competent to discuss it, and then when the Conference is called something will be ready. The Conference itself should limit the time to be consumed by each speaker, and the time to be occupied in its own deliberations. As in the Annual Sunday-school Conference, so in the District Sunday-school Conference, one entire day is not too much to be devoted to the consideration of the Sunday-school work, closing up at night with a mass-meeting, a Sunday-school concert, or a popular lecture on some feature of Sunday-school work.

In the District Sunday-school Conference the missionary work of Sunday-schools in its application to destitute places can be well discussed and provided for. This Conference ought to have power to employ agents to or-

ganize schools where they are needed; to order collections in the Sunday-schools and congregations of the district to help support and supply the schools among the destitute, and to designate the field of operation for any agent that might be employed. Suitable laymen can be found in each district who could be induced to spend a short time, say two or three months of the year, in this good work, and, with a little financial help to be wisely used in supplementing the supplies for Sunday-schools, soon have the work thoroughly organized, and in successful operation in every part of our territory. What better work for a District Conference?

How to organize and conduct a Sunday-school; how to open and close; how to study and teach; how to organize classes and grade them; how to select teachers and instruct them; how to hold teachers'-meetings; how to teach normal classes; how to provide for and teach primary classes and infant classes; how to seat and ornament Sunday-school rooms and infant-class rooms; how to select, arrange, label, number, and circulate a Sunday-school library; how to organize Sunday-schools into missionary societies; how to keep the Secre-

tary's books and make up the statistics; how to review the lesson, apply the lesson, use the blackboard, introduce strangers, conduct the opening and closing exercises, the singing, and every other matter of detail in the work of a Sunday-school, should be discussed and illustrated as far as possible in the District Sunday-school Conference. No part of the practical work of a Sunday-school should be omitted. When it is understood by every Sunday-school superintendent, officer, and teacher in the district that every part of the work of the Sunday-school will be overhauled, discussed, and as far as possible illustrated by the most experienced Sunday-school men at the District Conference, the attendance will not only be largely increased, but the beginners, the inexperienced, and the ambitious from every neighborhood Sunday-school will be there to learn, to think, to compare, to expand, to participate, and to be inspired for this great work at home. The qualifications and functions of superintendents, the character and qualification of teachers, the best methods of teaching, and the supreme object of all Sunday-school work, discussed by experienced men, and the different methods of opening and closing the school

illustrated, would send hundreds of officers and teachers back to their schools with the knowledge and the inspiration of the grandest work in which laymen and ladies can be engaged.

The religious services at the opening of these Conferences should vary from time to time, and be made to illustrate the opening exercises of the Sunday-school.

In both the Annual and the District Sunday-school Conferences it is important that all the vital and practical questions be freely discussed, not only by the speakers to whom the topics are assigned beforehand, but that the utmost freedom of discussion be allowed to all within the limitations of time and subjects. All the vital and practical questions cannot be discussed in one, or in two Conferences, but the value of the Conference will be not in the number of topics discussed, but in the character of the topics and the discussion itself. The effort to crowd too many topics into a brief space, and then whip the discussion through under the gavel, like a horse-auction, has defeated the real work of many conventions and conferences. To prepare a programme beforehand is wise, but to stereotype the Conference is to stultify the Conference;

and to put its deliberations through under whip and spur may make it live while it is going, but it will strangle the life and substance out of its work. It brings nothing to maturity.

As to a programme of subjects for the Annual and District Sunday-school Conferences, the headings to the several chapters of this little book will be suggestive. Not a topic discussed in these pages, or suggested by the discussion, that would not be appropriate for the programme of an Annual or a District Conference. Especially would it be appropriate and profitable for the Annual Sunday-school Conference to discuss the mission-work, the literature, the methods and the object of the Sunday-school; the conversion of children, the pastoral instruction of children, preaching to children, children's services, children's day, and the various methods adopted by pastors to instruct them in personal and practical godliness, in "the nature, design, privileges, and obligations of their baptism," and to prepare them to assume the obligations of Church-membership. These subjects need to be discussed in the presence of our younger preachers by the wisest heads of the Church, both clerical and lay. If for no other purpose than

the discussion of the conversion and the pastoral instruction of children, the Church could well afford to have these Conferences.

CHAPTER V.

TOPICS FOR SUNDAY-SCHOOL CONFERENCES.

MANY persons who are charged with the duty of preparing a programme for a Sunday-school Conference are thankful for suggestions of appropriate and profitable topics for discussion. They know about what features of the Sunday-school work they desire to have discussed, but if the subjects are formulated in terms for them it is very helpful. The value of discussion depends so largely upon the statement of the subject, that the following topics are submitted simply as suggestive of what may be stated in better terms, and what may be discussed with profit in Sunday-school Conferences:

1. What is a Sunday-school?
2. The supreme object of Sunday-schools.
Other objects.
3. In what sense is the Sunday-school the "nursery of the Church?"

4. Is the Sunday-school intended for children only?

5. What is the truest and highest theory of the Sunday-school?

6. The relation of the Sunday-school to other agencies: (1) To the Church; (2) To the gospel; (3) To the poor; (4) To the destitute; (5) To social life; (6) To the spread of scriptural holiness.

7. The true basis of Sunday-school work, and its inspired authority.

8. The Sunday-school and the conversion of children.

9. The Sunday-school and the spiritual life of the Church.

10. The influence of the modern Sunday-school system upon the type of piety in the future Church.

11. What will be the type of the future Church, the members of which are now in our Sunday-schools?

12. The pastor's relation to the Sunday-school.

13. The pastor's place; his office; his duty; his work.

14. Should the pastor be the regular teacher of a class?

15. The pastor's official relation to the children of the Church.

16. What is meant by the "pastoral instruction of children?"

17. How can the pastor best "instruct the children in the nature, design, privileges, and obligations of their baptism?"

18. How can the pastor fulfill his ministry to the children? By instructing them from house to house? or by catechising them in the Sunday-school? or by forming them into a class as *catechumens*? or by holding children's meetings and preaching to them?

19. The benefit of special service for children.

20. Preaching to children.

21. What is meant by the incident of "the child in the midst?"

22. Does the Sunday-school take the place of the parents in the religious instruction of children? Can parents transfer their obligations?

23. How can parents be induced to take more interest in the Sunday-school?

24. What relation does the Quarterly Conference sustain to the Sunday-school?

25. What is meant by a "Board of Managers?"

26. How are the official members of the Church related to the Sunday-school?

27. The model Sunday-school illustrated.

28. The infant class—its room, teacher, and methods.

29. Primary classes—how to grade and teach them.

30. The superintendent—his character, qualifications, and functions.

31. The teacher—his character and qualifications.

32. What other officers does a school need, and how should they be chosen?

33. Literature—the *Magazine*, the *Lesson Quarterlies*, the *Illustrated Lesson Paper*, the *Visitor*, *Our Little People*, and other helps. Do they help or hinder? Do they aid the student in acquiring a better knowledge of the Holy Scriptures?

34. The international lesson system—is it the best for our schools and Church?

35. Teachers'-meetings. Normal classes. Infant classes.

36. Mission Sunday-schools—where and how to organize them.

37. The Sunday-school as a missionary agency.

38. Sunday-school agents—how and when to employ them.

39. What is proper territory for mission Sunday-schools?

40. The Sunday-school as an evangelizing agency.

41. Sunday-schools and popular education.

42. Sunday-schools and popular skepticism.

43. Sunday-schools and popular literature.

44. Sunday-schools and the institutions of Christianity.

45. Sunday-schools and temperance.

46. Sunday-schools and the conversion of the world to Christ.

47. The value of organized work.

48. The advantages of holding frequent Conferences.

49. How the best methods for Sunday-school work can be utilized for the greatest good.

50. The International Convention, held in Atlanta, Ga., April, 1878, had this programme: "Theme—OUR WORK. I. Reported. II. Defined. III. Furnished. IV. Promoted. I. *Reported*: (1) Report of executive committee; (2) Report of statistical secretary; (3) Report from States and Provinces; (4) Report of international lesson committee. II. *Defined*:

(1) The true basis of Sunday-school work; (2) How related to other agencies; (3) Possibilities in the future. III. *Furnished*: (1) With lessons—"The uniform lesson; "The supplemental lesson. (2) With workers qualified—"By knowledge of work; "Of methods. IV. *Promoted*: (1) By State and Provincial organization; (2) By State conventions and institutes; (3) By normal instruction; (4) By Christian love and sympathy."

CHAPTER VI.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL CONCERT.

ORIGINALLY the Sunday-school concert was a monthly meeting for prayer on behalf of Sunday-schools, held in "concert" throughout the Eastern and Western States, on the second Monday evening, or night, of each month. After a time it was changed to Sunday evening, and the children were called into it to do the singing and to hear addresses. The original design was changed so as to admit of a broader plan and a higher purpose. Like other interests of the Sunday-school work, it grew upon the Church, and expanded into a flexible means of providing a special service

for children, and of securing a proper recognition of their rightful claims upon the ministrations of the gospel. This service has passed through various grades of transition since it started in the brain of some earnest layman, and has reached the position, in some sections, of a widely popular and useful religious service for the young. It has not only been a blessing to children and young people by providing them with special gospel services, and recognizing the claims of "the child in the midst" to such services, but it has benefited the whole Church by stirring and warming its heart and life in the Sunday-school work. Its speeches, songs, and prayers have turned the hearts of the fathers to the children, and brought the Sunday-school into the pale of the Church, and made it a part of the Church.

What started in a monthly concert of prayer *for* children, is now a most popular and successful meeting *of* children. It has developed the Sunday-school idea into an intelligent, well-defined theory of Christian work for the conversion of men, and made it the mightiest agency for the salvation of the young known to the Church. Under its discussions and

work children have grown in prominence before the Church, new opinions of their capacity to love and serve God have been formed, and many of them have been converted and added to the Church. The idea and plan of urging the claims of the gospel upon the immediate acceptance of children in the public congregation, and of expecting their conversion to Christ like any other sinners, started in the Sunday-school concert, and has grown into various forms of special service for children with this end in view. As affirmed in a previous chapter, the name "concert," as applied to these meetings, is a misnomer, and is misleading. It should have another name, as it has assumed a wider meaning.

Each church should devote one Sunday of each month to special service for children, to be called "Children's Day," which day should close with a popular service of the Sunday-school with the Church, such as has usually been called a Sunday-school concert. That service has not been developed to the fullest extent of its usefulness. Suppose we call it a Sunday-school mass-meeting, with a view of massing the Sunday-school and the Church, the parents and the children, the teachers and

the pupils, together once a month for a united service; then, how could such a service be made interesting and profitable? About as follows:

1. Let it be held in the audience-room of the church.

2. Let the children occupy the front seats with their teachers.

3. Let suitable songs be selected which the children can sing, and about four speakers, to occupy ten minutes each, with subjects agreed upon and prepared beforehand. Then let the exercises follow about in this order: (1) A song. (2) A song, all standing. (3) Prayer, kneeling, and closing with the Lord's Prayer, repeated in concert. (4) A song, sitting. (5) Bible-reading, in alternate verses, called responsive reading. (6) A song. (7) Address—topic, Object of Sunday-schools. (8) A song. (9) Address—topic, Character and Qualifications of Teachers. (10) A song. (11) Address—topic, Parents in the Sunday-school. (12) A song. (13) Address—topic, Conversion of Children, by the pastor. (14) A prayer. (15) A song, and benediction—all occupying one hour.

By varying the subjects from time to time

every interest of the Sunday-school and Church may be touched up, and by varying the speakers much of the latent talent of the Church may be developed and utilized. Such meetings and discussions may have many of the advantages of a local Church Conference.

CHAPTER VII.

“CHILDREN’S DAY.”

EVERY settled congregation of the Church should set apart one Sunday in each month for the children, to be called “Children’s Day.” Considering the claims of the children upon the ministry, their proportion to the whole number of the congregation, the fact that no provision is made for them in the public worship, and that they can find so little in the usual sermons and services for adults to interest and profit them, one-fourth of the Sunday-service of each month is not too much to give to the children of the Church. They have a right to that much of the Church-service, and their religious nurture demands that much. “The child in the midst” has divine rights in the kingdom of God which

Jesus recognized, and which the Church practically ignores. Says a recent writer: "Can not children be saved? If they are to be saved, is it an exception to the rule that it hath 'pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe?' 'How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?' Parents may neglect their duty toward their children; 'yea, they may forget.' 'A woman may forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb,' yet would not God leave such home-neglected little ones without hope, nor cause that their teeth should be set on edge because of the sour grapes that their fathers have eaten. Hence it is that he hath sent ambassadors, with a message as to the right, to 'every creature' out of the way, and has declared that 'the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.' Are not all who are old enough to be lost without the knowledge of Jesus entitled to hear of him at the lips of his messengers?" We have neglected them long enough, and a plea for one Sunday in each month is not too much time

and service for these little ones that believe on Him. We plead and provide for heathen children, while many are growing up in our Churches practically without the gospel.

The announcement of a "Children's Day" turns the thought and the heart of the Church to the children, and makes the children feel that they have a place in the Church of their fathers; that they are not an excommunicated nor a neglected class. To make "Children's Day" profitable to the largest degree, the thought and heart of the Church should be given to the children. They should be specially remembered in the closets and at the family-altars in the morning. Sunday-school teachers and officers should hold a prayer-meeting of ten or fifteen minutes before opening the Sunday-school to pray for the children, and especially for divine help to lead souls to Christ by the lessons and services of the day. Why not do this every Sunday? Parents should attend their children to the Sunday-school and service of this day, if on no other day, to aid by their presence, their prayers, their influence, and sanction the work that others are trying to do for the children, and to deepen the impressions that may be made

upon them during the day, by such remarks and application as may occur to them after the service is over. By a timely, practical application of the lesson, or the illustration, the parent may make a lasting impression on the child that will shape his life forever; and by carping, captious criticism and fault-finding upon the part of the parent, the child's mind may be warped for evil forever. Do we ever think of this when we are discussing so freely, at the dinner-table and fireside, the sermon and service of the morning?

The Sunday-school lesson and closing exercises of "Children's Day" should be made as personal and practical to the children as possible. Personal appeals should be made to them, and simple instruction given them concerning their accountability to God, their duty to become Christians—to love God, and keep his commandments; how to repent and believe, and the nature, privileges, and obligations of the Christian life. The Sunday-school teacher should talk personally to the members of his class about their souls, and seek in that way to lead them to Christ. It is a good plan for the teacher to meet his class at some convenient time and place after the morning school and

sermon, to talk and pray with them. How many children and young people have been brought to Jesus by faithful teachers, in this way, eternity alone can reveal.

When the Sunday-school closes, and after a brief interval, the children should be assembled with the congregation in the audience-room of the church. They should occupy the front seats, with a sufficient number of parents and teachers interspersed among them to keep them in order. The service should be so arranged as to give the children as large a part in the exercises as possible, and to secure variety. They should be required to aid in reading the Scripture-lessons by responsive or elliptical reading, repeat in concert the Lord's Prayer, answer questions occasionally, and do the singing. Where there is a choir, let the choir lead the children in the service of song. As to the sermon, let it be carefully studied beforehand as to the subject, the plan, the language, the illustrations, the object, and the application: not that every thing in it and about it should be so stereotyped that the incidents and inspiration of the occasion cannot get into it, but that it should be so assimilated in the preacher's mind and heart that the inspiration

of the occasion will set both the preacher and the sermon on fire of love and zeal, and kindle the occasion and the audience into a holy enthusiasm, under the baptism of the Spirit, that will win, and move, and melt every heart at the cross. The sermon should come within the limits of twenty and thirty minutes—never fall under twenty, and never go beyond thirty minutes. A song may sometimes be happily introduced in the middle of the sermon. Stories for illustration should always be natural, truthful, brief, and not too many. Never tell long stories, and use the stories to illustrate the sermon, and not the sermon to carry the stories. When you get done, quit; and make it a point always to dismiss the children with a pleasant impression on their minds.

When it is possible to do so, one hour in the afternoon of "Children's Day" should be spent in catechising the children, and applying the lessons of the day, interspersed with singing.

The evening service should be given to a Sunday-school concert, or mass-meeting, or conference, conducted as suggested in the preceding chapter.

When children have been prepared by conversion and previous instruction, let them

be received into the Church on "Children's Day," according to the provision of the Discipline.

CHAPTER VIII.

BIBLE-READING SERVICE.

THE aversion of Methodists to ritualism in any form is not an unmixed good. There are forms of service especially suited to children that are profitable for doctrine and for instruction, which, if adopted by us, would greatly enhance the value of the religious instruction of our children. But they smack of ritualism, therefore they will never be generally adopted by us, however good in themselves. And yet we have a rubric, and are required to follow it in every service, and especially in the sacraments and ordinations. Strange enough, our chief objection to ritualism lies against its responsive service. Every pastor knows how strong this instinctive aversion is by his fruitless efforts to induce the congregation to make the responses in the administration of the sacraments, and even to repeat with him the Lord's Prayer where it is explicitly directed in the rubric. The worship in Methodist Churches

for over thirty years, in cities and country, has failed to find a single instance in which the congregation follows the rubric in the ordinances and sacraments of the Church. Here and there may be an individual exception, but no congregation as such, known to the writer, makes the responses prescribed for these services. Should any congregation observe it, that Church would be charged with High-churchism. Such is the instinctive aversion of Methodism to every form of ritualism. But, notwithstanding all this, no form of service for children can be more profitable than the "Children's Bible-service," in which the Scriptures are read and recited in responsive lessons. Several different methods of reading have been adopted, and used successfully by the leading ministers and teachers of the day. In Groser's work on Illustrative Teaching; in the annual volumes of the Biblical Treasury, published by the London Sunday-school Union; in Dr. Newton's Offices of Devotion for the Use of Sunday-schools; in J. G. Fitch's Art of Questioning; in J. B. Draper's Essays on Our Lessons; in Walt Abbott's Our Sunday-school; in Philip Phillips's Singing Pilgrim; in F. A. Packard's Teacher Taught; in J. H. Vincent's

Sunday-school Reader, for Opening Service and Class Study; in the new Sunday-school Manual, by Carlton & Porter; and in many other similar works, the value of Bible-service for opening and closing school, for children's-meetings, and for Sunday-school Conferences, is set forth in strong terms, and put upon the highest plane of religious instruction. A variety of forms for this service may be grouped under the following general headings: *Expository* Reading, *Illustrative* Reading, *Interrogatory* Reading, *Simultaneous* Reading, *Responsive* Reading, and *Elliptical* Reading.

EXPOSITORY AND ILLUSTRATIVE READING.—Under this head the leader selects and reads the Scripture-lesson himself, making such brief expository comments on the lesson and illustrating the lesson with such incidents as he may choose, to give it point and application to the children. Great care should be taken in the selection of the lesson; and then it should be studied very thoroughly by the leader, so that his comments and illustrations will be ready at his tongue's end. All parts of the Bible are not equally adapted to this kind of reading. To aid the inexperienced

reader, the following are suggested: *The Parables and Miracles of Jesus*—The Visit of the Wise Men to Jesus, Matt. ii. 1–12; The Crucifixion, Mark xv. 15–38; The Resurrection of Jesus, Luke xxiv. 1–15; Love to God and Man, 1 John iv. 7–21; Obedience and Courage, Eph. vi. 1–13; The Heavenly Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 10–25; The Trial of Abraham's Faith, Gen. xxii. 1–14; Blessings for Obedience, Deut. xxviii. 1–14; David and Goliath, 1 Sam. xvii. 38–50; Naaman and the Jewish Maid, 2 Kings v. 1–14; Exhortation to Early Piety, Eccl. xii. 1–14; The Excellence of Wisdom, Prov. iv. 1–15; The Child in the Midst, Matt. xviii. 1–11.

INTERROGATORY READING.—After the lesson is read, let the leader ask such questions, to be answered by the children, as will help to fasten the truth taught upon the mind. Suppose the lesson should be Luke v. 1–11, then the following questions, furnished by Draper, will serve to illustrate the value of this kind of reading: 1. For what reason did the people press upon Jesus? 2. How were the owners of the two ships employed? 3. Whose ship did Jesus choose to enter? 4. After his sermon, what command did he give to the fishermen? 5.

What answer was given by Peter? 6. How did the fishermen succeed in their fishing? 7. What did they do with the large quantity of fish they caught? 8. What effect did this miracle have upon Peter? 9. And what effect did it have upon his companions? 10. How did Jesus comfort Peter? 11. What did the disciples do when they came to land?

SIMULTANEOUS READING.—All read in concert; that is, simultaneously by the leader and the congregation. This kind of reading, when the numbers in attendance are large, will always create confusion where there has been no previous training as to the breath-pauses. Unless these pauses for breath are made at short intervals and in concert, the reading will be a confusion. Let the dashes in the following selection from Matt. xxv. 1-6 indicate the breath-pauses, and the value of this kind of reading will be understood: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven——be likened unto ten virgins,——which took their lamps,——and went forth——to meet the bridegroom.——And five of them were wise,——and five were foolish.——They that were foolish——took their lamps,——and took no oil with them:——but the wise took oil——in their vessels," etc. I

do not recommend this last form of reading for general use. It can only be successful in well-trained schools, and then only after much practice.

CHAPTER IX.

BIBLE-READING, CONTINUED.

RESPONSIVE READING.

THIS kind of reading, which is also called alternate reading, is not suited alike to all portions of the Bible. The Psalms and the Proverbs, many of them, were originally arranged for use in liturgical service, and are peculiarly fitted for this kind of reading; albeit the common arrangement of them into chapters and verses mars their use in this form as much as it does their force and beauty. The Psalms especially were obviously designed for this kind of use in public worship. Dr. Alexander says: "They are all poetical; not merely imaginative and expressive of feeling, but stamped eternally with that peculiar character of parallelism which distinguishes the higher style of Hebrew composition from ordinary prose. They are all ecclesiastical lyrics, psalms or hymns, intended to be permanently

used in public worship." Another writer says: "In all, or nearly all of them, the two parts, *lead* and *response*, are clearly traceable throughout. Thought answers to thought, emotion to emotion, and the responsive utterance by leader and people develops the beauty and power of their inspired words in a much higher degree than can be realized by the ordinary mode of reading by alternate verses."

Psalm lxvii. will illustrate the above statement, and show the original parallelism. The *lead* is printed in Roman letters, and the *response* in Italics:

1. God be merciful unto us, and bless us;
And cause his face to shine upon us.
2. That thy way may be known upon earth,
Thy saving health among all nations.
3. Let the people praise thee, O God;
Let all the people praise thee.
4. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy:
*For thou shalt judge the people righteously,
and govern the nations upon earth.*
5. Let the people praise thee, O God;
Let all the people praise thee.
6. Then shall the earth yield her increase;
And God, even our own God, shall bless us.

7. God shall bless us;

And all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

In many of the Psalms the two parts are so readily distinguished that the congregation can read the response from the common version when the leader has read his part. For instance, in Psalm cxix. the responses can be readily supplied to the following:

9. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?

10. With my whole heart have I sought thee;

11. Thy word have I hid in mine heart,

12. Blessed art thou, O Lord:

13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.

15. I will meditate in thy precepts,

16. I will delight myself in thy statutes.

ELLIPTICAL READING.

This method can be applied to any portion of the Scriptures, and it is the only way that narrative can be successfully read by responses. It requires practice and familiarity with the lesson. The congregation must be taught not to begin until the leader stops, and then to read to the end of the period. If the lead-

er reads a whole verse, the congregation are expected to read the next verse. Take the narrative of the Prodigal Son, Luke xv. 11-22, the ellipses to be supplied by the congregation:

11. And he said, —.

12. And the younger of them said to his father, —.

13. And not many days after the youngest son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, —.

14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; —.

15. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; —.

16. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: —.

17. And when he came to himself, he said, —.

20. And he arose, and came to his father. —.

21. And the son said unto him, —.

22. But the father said to his servants, —.

This elliptical form of reading may be profitably employed as an occasional change in any Sunday-school or special service for chil-

dren, but it can only be used successfully after training.

To the various forms here given may be added the method of Bible-reading adopted extensively by evangelists and Young Men's Christian Association workers—viz., to hand out to the audience bits of paper, numbered, with the book, chapter, and verse to be read written on them, and then call out the numbers, and let the person holding the number rise up and read the passage, upon which the leader offers his comment. For example, a slip of paper marked "4" is handed to John Smith. When the leader has disposed of one, two, and three, he calls out "number four." John Smith rises and reads Rom. x. 9, 10, which he found marked on No. 4, to which he had already turned; then the leader proceeds with his comments. This is a very effective way of expounding the Scriptures by a brief, practical commentary; but it is better suited to adults than children. The earnest pastor may try successfully all of these methods in his Sunday-school and congregation; but it requires familiarity with the Scriptures, with ready, rapid, and telling comments to make the reading interesting and

profitable. Illustrations and pointed application of the subject can be successfully made. Few men are successful Bible-readers for an audience. It seems to be a special gift.

CHAPTER X.

FORMS FOR OPENING AND CLOSING.

THE first and second forms here given are arranged by Henry P. Haven, superintendent of a Congregational Church Sunday-school in New London, Connecticut, and printed in sheets for the use of his school. They may be adopted in part or in whole for opening and closing any Sunday-school.

FIRST FORM.

At the tap of the bell, all bow their heads in silent prayer. At a second tap, the assembly rises.

The leader says: "Gather the people together, men and women, and children, and the stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law." Deut. xxxi. 12.

In concert all repeat: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him." Deut. vi. 4, 5, 13.

The superintendent says: "Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee. And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord; that it may be well with thee." Deut. vi. 17, 18.

The assembly responds: "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us." Deut. vi. 24, 25.

The assembly chants:

O sing unto the Lord a | new— | song;
Sing unto the | Lord— | all the | earth;
Sing unto the Lord; | bless his | name;
Show forth his sal | vation, from | day to | day,
Declare his glory a | mong the | heathen.
His wonders a | mong | all | people.

For the Lord is great, and greatly | to be | praised;
He is to be | feared a | bove all | gods.
O worship the Lord in the | beauty of | holiness;
Fear be | fore him, | all the | earth.

The assembly being seated, the leader reads a selection from the New Testament having reference to the topic of the day.

All rising, an appropriate Psalm is read responsively by leader and assembly.

In concert all repeat: "Blessed be the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Eph. i. 3.

The assembly being seated, a hymn is sung. All being in a position for prayer (kneeling, bowing forward the head, standing, or sitting with the eyes covered by the hand, as may be the practice), prayer is offered by the leader, closing with the Lord's Prayer, in which all unite.

The school rises. The leader says: "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." Neh. viii. 8.

Passages appropriate to the theme of the day are read responsively by the assembly in divisions.

The assembly being seated, a hymn is sung.

Rising, all recite, in concert, this statement of Christian doctrines, in the language of Scripture:

All Men are Sinners. "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." Eccl. vii. 20. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. v. 12.

All Must be Converted. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." St. John iii. 3. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Titus iii. 5.

Jesus the Only Saviour. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. i. 15. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts iv. 12.

Final Destiny of the Righteous and the Wicked. "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall

come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." St. John v. 28, 29. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." Matt. xxv. 46.

For the foregoing statement, the Apostles' Creed may be substituted, if preferred.

The general exercises for the day follow this opening exercise. At their close the assembly rises, as at the opening, at the tap of the bell.

The leader says: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." Josh. i. 8.

The assembly responds: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

A hymn is sung, followed by the doxology to close the service.

SECOND FORM.

Rising at the tap of the bell, all recite in concert:

This is the day which the Lord hath made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it. (Ps. cxviii. 24.)

Hear my prayer, O Lord!

Give ear to my supplications. (Ps. cxliii. 1.)

Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul;

O my God, I trust in thee. (Ps. xxv. 1, 2.)

Show me thy ways, O Lord;

Teach me thy paths. (Ps. xxv. 4.)

For thou art the God of my salvation;

On thee do I wait all the day. (Ps. xxv. 5.)

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart;

And lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge him,

And he shall direct thy paths. (Prov. iii. 5, 6.)

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. (1 Tim. i. 15.)

A hymn is sung. All rising, selections from the twenty-seventh Psalm, as follows, are read responsively by the leader and assembly:

The Lord is my light and my salvation;

Whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the strength of my life;

Of whom shall I be afraid?

One thing have I desired of the Lord,

That will I seek after;

That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

To behold the beauty of the Lord,

And to inquire in his temple.

For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion;

In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;

He shall set me up upon a rock.

Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy;

I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.

Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice;

Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

When thou saidst, Seek ye my face;

My heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.

Thou hast been my help; leave me not,

Neither forsake me, O God of my salvation!

Teach me thy way, O Lord!

And lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.

I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the

Lord

In the land of the living.

Wait on the Lord!

Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart;

Wait I say on the Lord!

In concert all say:

The Lord our God be with us, let him not leave us, nor forsake us: that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments. (1 Kings viii. 57, 58.)

The assembly being seated, a hymn is sung. Prayer is offered, closing with the Lord's Prayer, in which all unite.

All rising, the following selections are read,

in alternation by the leader and assembly, from the teachings of Christ in the sermon on the mount:

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus. (Acts xx. 35.)
Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. v. 3.)

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. (Matt. v. 6.)

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. (Matt. v. 7.)

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. (Matt. v. 8.)

Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God. (Matt. v. 9.)

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. v. 10.)

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matt. v. 16.)

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. (Matt. v. 44.)

When thou doest alms, let not thy left-hand know what thy right-hand doeth. (Matt. vi. 3.)

When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. (Matt. vi. 6.)

If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. (Matt. vi. 14.)

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matt. vi. 15.)

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. (Matt. vii. 7.)

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. (Matt. vii. 8.)

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. (Matt. vii. 13.)

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (Matt. vii. 14.)

The assembly being seated, a hymn is sung. The general exercises for the day follow. At their close, the assembly rises, at the tap of the bell, and the Ten Commandments are recited in concert.

The leader says: "These are the commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai." Lev. xxvii. 34.

In concert all recite:

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness.
10. Thou shalt not covet. (Ex. xx. 3-17.)

The leader says: "The sum of the commandments, as given by our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Gospel according to St. Mark, twelfth chapter, twenty-ninth, thirtieth, and thirty-first verses, reads——"

Assembly recites: "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

The assembly being seated, a hymn is sung. Prayer is offered, followed by the benediction, if a minister leads.

THIRD FORM.

A very simple form, suited to almost any Sunday-school, and adopted by many of our schools, is the following:

Punctually at the minute for opening, the bell taps for silence.

1. A song is announced. The bell taps twice for all to rise and sing.

2. All kneel and pray, closing with the Lord's Prayer in concert.

3. Another song—all seated.

4. The bell taps twice for all to rise. With *Lesson Quarterly* in hand, the superintendent asks, "What is the subject of the lesson to-day?" All answer, repeating the subject of the lesson. "What is the Golden Text?" All recite the Golden Text in concert. Then may follow any other questions, to be answered by the whole school, such as, What is the central truth? the date? the place? etc., just to fix attention; and then the superintendent and school read the text of the lesson for the day, in responses, by alternate verses.

5. At one tap of the bell, all are seated. The superintendent may read any other passages bearing on the lesson of the day, or he may speak a word about the practical value of the lesson, and give any general direction to teachers, or others, about the school-session, not consuming over two or three minutes.

6. Roll-call. At one tap of the bell, the officers rise and answer to their names; at another tap of the bell, the teachers rise and answer to their names. At the conclusion of roll-call, the superintendent asks, "Are there any classes without teachers to-day?" Classes

whose teachers are absent rise and stand until they are supplied with teachers, or are asked to be seated. (To supply the place of absent teachers is the first duty of the superintendent.)

7. At the tap of the bell, the superintendent orders the teachers to take up the lesson.

This opening exercise should consume not less than seven nor more than fifteen minutes. Thirty minutes should be given to the lesson, without interruption from any one or any thing; and fifteen minutes to take up the collection, distribute papers, exchange books, apply the lesson, and close the session—making just one hour for the entire session of the school. A school may be trained to be prompt to the minute, and thus secure the moral value of time.

TO CLOSE.—1. At the first tap of the bell, everybody gives attention to the superintendent. Collection taken, papers distributed, and books exchanged. 2. A song. 3. General application of the lesson. 4. Reports from officers. 5. A song, all standing. 6. The Apostles' Creed, repeated in concert, and the school dismissed.

N. B.—These forms may be used, in whole

or in part, in any public exercises of the Sunday-school, such as anniversaries, concerts, picnics, mass-meetings; and with suitable changes of texts and songs, they will do for Christmas and Easter services.

CHAPTER XI.

CHILDREN'S SERVICE.

As a specimen of my own way of conducting children's service, it may be profitable to reproduce here about the substance of a service for children conducted recently in the Sunday-school room of Tulip Street Church, Nashville, Tenn., of which I am now the pastor. It is a fair sample of the children's service held every Sunday afternoon in the presence of many parents, Sunday-school officers, teachers, and visitors, the large room being generally full of people.

The children are all seated together, and in front; the organ and chorister facing the children, but a little to one side; each child is furnished with a song-book, and the chorister always stands up before them to lead the singing. Promptly at 3 P.M. the singing begins.

Two or three songs are sung while the children are assembling; then the pastor, standing on the floor in front of and near them, begins about thus:

“Whose house is this?”

“God’s house.”

“Is God in his house?”

“Yes, sir.”

“How do you know that God is in his house?”

“Because God is everywhere.”

“And then the Bible says, ‘The Lord is in his holy temple.’ Is this house his holy temple?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Can you see God in this house to-day?”

“No, sir.”

“Can he see you?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Does he know every thing that you do?”

“Yes, sir.”

“If you come into my house, you would n’t do any thing that would offend me, would you?”

“No, sir.”

“Then you would n’t do any thing that would offend God, in his own house, would you?”

“No, sir.”

"You said that God is everywhere. That is what we call God's 'omnipresence.'"

"Does God know every thing?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is what we call God's 'omniscience.'"

"Now, what are we assembled here in God's house for?"

"To worship."

"Yes, to worship God. All the holy angels, and all the good people worship God. And we, his children, will worship him in spirit and in truth. Our songs of praise, our prayers, and all the exercises of this hour, we offer to God with our devotions to-day. When we sing, all must sing; and when we pray, all must pray—at least all must join in the Lord's Prayer. Now let us stand, and sing."

"Let us pray." All kneel, and at the close of a short extempore prayer, abounding in thanksgiving, all repeat the Lord's Prayer, then all rise and sing; after which the pastor asks:

"What is sin?"

"The transgression of the law of God."

"What is a Christian?"

"One who loves God, and keeps his commandments."

"How many commandments are there?"

"Ten."

"Who gave the commandments?"

"God."

"To whom did God give them?"

"To Moses."

"Upon what did he write them?"

"On two tables of stone."

"How many were on the first table?"

"Four."

"How many on the second table?"

"Six."

"What do the commandments on the first table teach us?"

"Our duty to God."

"What do those on the second table teach us?"

"Our duty to man."

"What is the first commandment?"

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

"Second?"

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image."

"Third?"

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

"Fourth?"

“Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.”

“These all teach us our duty to God.”

“Fifth?”

“Honor thy father and thy mother.”

“Sixth?”

“Thou shalt not kill.”

“Seventh?”

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

“Eighth?”

“Thou shalt not steal.”

“Ninth?”

“Thou shalt not bear false witness.”

“Tenth?”

“Thou shalt not covet.”

“These all teach us our duty to man.”

“What is the eighth?”

“Thou shalt not steal.”

“The sixth?”

“Thou shalt not kill.”

“Ninth?”

“Thou shalt not bear false witness.”

“Fourth?”

“Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.”

“Seventh?”

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

“Second?”

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.”

“Fifth?”

“Honor thy father and thy mother.”

“Third?”

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”

“Tenth?”

“Thou shalt not covet.”

“First?”

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

“Sing.”

These questions and answers are repeated as rapidly as possible, the children never knowing which commandment will be called for; but, knowing all by number, they are on the sharpest outlook to see who can answer first. It keeps them wide-awake. After the song, how the commandments are broken, and what it is to break them, is taught in this way:

“Who break the first commandment?”

“The heathen.”

“What are they called who break the first commandment?”

“Idolators.”

“Many people break the first command-

ment who would be insulted if you were to call them 'heathen,' or 'idolators.' They live here in this Christian land. They worship self, or gold, or gain, or dress, or pleasure, or honor, or mammon, more than God. Are they idolators?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are they heathen?"

"No, sir."

"No; some of them want us to call them Christians."

"How do people break the second commandment?"

"By worshiping images."

"How do they break the third commandment?"

"By swearing."

"Did you ever hear anybody swear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you ever hear any boys swear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Boys? Why, what did they look like?"

"They looked like bad boys."

"I should think so, and they are bad boys. Now, tell me, boys, did you ever hear any men swear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Grown-up men?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did they look like?"

"Irishmen," piped in one little fellow.

"Did not some of them look like Americans?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, tell me truly, boys, did you ever hear your father swear?"

"Yes, sir." "No, sir." "Yes, sir."

I am glad that *you* never heard your father swear, but O how sorry I am for that boy who has heard his father swear.

Some years ago I was asking these questions of about two hundred children, seated in a church with about as many grown people. One little boy, sitting on his father's lap very near me, was answering the questions with the rest, and had become so excited that his voice was pitched on a high key. When I asked, "Did you ever hear your father swear?" his voice piped up sharply, "*Yes, sir,*" and no one else answered. Every voice was hushed for a moment. The father was startled; he turned pale; the hot blood mounted to the temples, and then rushed back upon the heart, leaving the ashen hue of death. He looked this way

and that to see if there was any way of escape only to find that he was the center of every eye; he dropped his head, and felt a partial relief when the service went on. At the close of the service, he said to me, with much feeling, "It is too true! it is too true that this little fellow has heard his father swear; but by the help of God, he shall never hear me swear again." He went home very sad, repented of his sins, and became a Christian.

"Now, children, this commandment differs from all the rest, because God added to it the words, 'for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.' It must be an awful sin to swear, and yet it is, perhaps, the most common of all the sins. Now sing."

I read Matt. xviii. 1-6, and comment on it by telling them how "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them," and taught us that even a *little* child cannot only be a Christian, but be the best Christian in the Church.

"What is a Christian?"

"One who loves God, and keeps his commandments."

"How many of these children are Christians?"

A good many little hands go up.

“Who makes you a Christian?”

“Jesus.”

“How does Jesus make you a Christian?”

“By forgiving my sins.” “By giving me a new heart.”

“Yes; when he forgives sins, he gives us a new heart. Now, how many of you want to be Christians?”

Many little hands go up.

“Jesus became a little child himself that every little child might become a Christian, and love him, and keep his commandments. He died on the cross to take away our sins, and make us new creatures, that we may go to heaven when we die, and live with him forever. He took a *little* child, not a *big* child, and set him in the midst. He said, ‘Suffer the *little* children to come unto me,’ not the *big* children; he wanted the *little* children as well as the big children. I want every child here to come to Jesus, and be saved. ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’ That is faith, and faith is just taking God at his word. Whatever he promises in his word that will he do. A little girl, nine years old, taught me the nature of faith. In a love-feast

in Kirkwood, Mo., she said: 'I love Jesus. How much I love Jesus, I cannot tell; but I love him because he first loved me, and because he has forgiven my sins. I never told you about my first prayer. I was just six years old, and was living with my grandma, as I am now.' Then she told in simple language about her first prayer, how God answered it, and said: 'Ever since then I have been praying to him every day. He does n't always answer my prayer at the time; but if I have his promise, that is just as good to me as if I had what I ask for. I'll take his promise for it, and he can answer it when it pleases him.' Don't you know that my heart melted? And not mine only, but every heart in that church melted. That is faith exactly. 'If I have his promise, that is just as good to me as if I had what I ask for.' If we confess our sins, does he not promise to forgive our sins?"

"Yes, sir."

"If we ask him, does he not promise that we shall receive?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then let us confess our sins, and ask him to forgive us, and believe that he does forgive our sins, because he has promised. Let us pray."

At this, all kneel and pray. Sometimes a few moments are spent in silent prayer, followed by a short appropriate prayer; then, after a few words of counsel about how to live, how to keep the commandments, and what to do when we break them, all rise and sing an appropriate song, repeat the Apostles' Creed, and are dismissed.

During this service the utmost freedom, consistent with the occasion and the place, is allowed the bubbling young life of children; and incidents from child-life are used to illustrate the subject, and correct many little evil habits among children. This service is usually followed by a class-meeting in the study with those who are trying to be Christians, in which they tell their experience, and receive such personal and practical instruction as will be suited to each particular case. Many of these little ones are greatly troubled at times about their experience, but more so about their duty, just for all the world as grown people are; but they are readier to listen to good advice, and are more tractable than grown people. In this field the pastor's work is productive of lasting good, for by wisdom, grace, tact, and love, he can mold, develop,

and direct the character of these little ones for time and eternity.

'T is not a cause of small import
The pastor's care demands;
But what might fill an angel's heart,
And filled a Saviour's hands.

CHAPTER XII.

CHRISTMAS SERVICE.

THE Sunday-school room or church should be appropriately decorated for the anniversary of our Lord's nativity, and the children should be previously well trained in the songs and recitations. The songs for this service cannot be designated unless all of our schools were using the same song-book; but the superintendent, or some other competent person, should make the most appropriate selections possible from the books at command. In our Church Hymn-book are "Joy to the World," "Star of Bethlehem," and others. In the *New Life* are "Christmas Song," "Come to the Fountain," "Anniversary Hymn," etc. Let the best be selected, and have many of them well practiced. Either have classes or indi-

vidual children to make the responses, to whom the responses can be furnished in writing, to be memorized where the service is not printed. It is more impressive when all the service is memorized. Have the children well seated in front, and let the service be brief, especially if it is to be followed by refreshments, or the distribution of presents, or both refreshments and presents.

PROGRAMME.

1. A song by the school, all standing.
2. Prayer, closing with the Lord's Prayer, repeated in concert.

3. A song, all sitting.

4. What do we call this day? (By pastor, superintendent, or other suitable person.)

School. Christmas-day.

What is Christmas-day?

School. The anniversary of Christ's nativity.

How long since Christ was born?

School. About 1882 years.

Why do we call this year A.D. 1882?

A Boy. A.D. stands for *Anno Domini*, which means the year of our Lord.

Who foretold the coming of Christ?

School. The prophets.

Will you repeat any prophecies that foretold the coming of Christ?

First Child, or Class. The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh

come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. (Gen. xlix. 10.)

Third Child. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isa. ix. 6.)

Fourth Child. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. (Isa. lix. 20.)

Second Child. Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and 'bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isa. vii. 14.)

Fifth Child. In his days shall Judah be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness. (Jer. xxiii. 6.)

Sixth Child. And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. (Mal. iii. 1.)

Seventh Child. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings. (Mal. iv. 2.)

5. A song.

6. What does the nativity of Christ mean?

School. The *birth* of Christ.

Where was Jesus born?

School. In Bethlehem of Judea.

When?

School. In the days of Herod the king.

Who came from the east to Jerusalem?

School. Wise men.

What did they see in the east?

School. His star.

Who were abiding in the field by night?

School. Shepherds.

What were they doing?

School. Keeping watch over their flocks.

Who appeared unto them?

School. The Angel of the Lord.

What did he say unto them?

School. Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Who else appeared unto them?

School. A multitude of the heavenly host.

What were they doing?

School. Praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.

7. A song.

8. What record have we concerning the birth of Christ?

First Child, or Class. Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem. (Matt. ii. 1.)

Second Child. Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. (Matt. ii. 2.)

Third Child. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. (St. Luke ii. 8, 9.)

Fourth Child. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. (St. Luke ii. 10.)

Fifth Child. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. (St. Luke ii. 11.)

Sixth Child. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying. (St. Luke ii. 13.)

School. Standing, and all repeating together with animation, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men. (St. Luke ii. 14.)

9. A song, all standing.

10. An address.

11. A song.

12. A prayer, and the benediction.

It will increase the force and effect if the children who make the responses are scattered about over the house, and rise in their places and speak in a clear, distinct voice. Short addresses may be interspersed through the programme.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANOTHER CHRISTMAS SERVICE.

LAST Christmas I gave my Sunday-school at Tulip Street Church, Nashville, Tenn., a little surprise by improvising a short service, of which the following is the plan and substance.

I wrote the questions on slips of paper, and numbered them, then selected as many chil-

dren as I had slips of paper, spoke to them privately, and asked them to meet me at the church two hours before the service. I gave to each one a slip of paper, stationed them about in the church as I wanted them, and asked them to stand up and read the questions in the order in which they were numbered, waiting each time for the answer. After going through the performance, I dismissed them with the injunction of secrecy, asking them to memorize the questions, and be promptly in their places. The audience that packed the church were wholly ignorant of the programme. At the appointed time the school rose and sung a glad Christmas-song, which was followed by a prayer of thanksgiving, closing with the Lord's Prayer. After another song, I made a running statement about Christmas and the children, occupying about three minutes, when a bright little girl in the audience arose and, in a distinct voice, asked:

First Child. Why is this day called Christmas?

Ans. It is so called from the feast of our Lord's nativity. The word comes from *Christ* and *mass*, which means a holy day, or feast, hence we have *Christmas*.

Second Child. When was this Christmas festival instituted, and by whom?

Ans. Christmas, on the 25th day of December, was instituted by Pope Julius I., in the fourth century.

Third Child. Was it always observed on the 25th day of December?

Ans. No. Before this decree of Julius I., as early as A.D. 138, the Church began to observe the feast of the nativity by authority of the decretal letters of Pope Telesphorus.

Fourth Child. How was Christmas observed by Roman Catholics in early times?

Ans. By the celebration of three masses; one at midnight, one at early dawn, and one in the morning. It was then a common tradition that Christ was born at midnight, and they rocked the cradle at midnight in the church, which custom is still kept up in some countries. But when Jesus was born the manger was his only cradle.

Fifth Child. How was Christmas celebrated in the middle ages?

Ans. By gay, fantastic scenes of a dramatic character. The performers wore grotesque masks and fantastic costumes. They often represented in their weird scenes an infant in a cradle, surrounded by the Virgin Mary and Joseph, by bull's-heads, cherubs, Eastern Magi, and many other curious symbols. They sung Christmas carols, accompanied by the music of violins, guitars, organs, and other instruments. Fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, bishops, priests, and people, all joined together in these carols and dances, each bearing a lighted wax taper, making the night scenes grotesque and weird beyond conception.

Sixth Child. How is Christmas observed in merry England?

Ans. In ye olden times the bells were rung at midnight; they assembled in the churches, celebrated mass, had a sumptuous feast, and then entered upon what were called

the "December liberties," the feast of fools and asses, and other grotesque Saturnalia, in which every thing serious was burlesqued, and the proprieties and decencies of society were ridiculed. It is observed now with the proprieties of a Christian festival.

Seventh Child. What of Christmas in Germany, and Northern Europe?

Ans. Christmas is called the "Children's Festival" in Germany and in the countries of Northern Europe, and Christmas-eve is devoted to giving presents from the Christmas-tree. You know all about the Christmas-tree, and how the presents are distributed from them. In those countries each member of the family receives a present, but the children are not always joyous, for the mother takes this occasion to tell her daughters, and the father his sons, what they have seen good in their conduct, and what they have seen bad. They do this privately, but it spoils many a bad child's Christmas. In some of the smaller villages of North Germany all the presents for all the children are sent to one place, and the funniest man they can find dresses himself up in high buskins, fur robes, flax wig and mask, and takes the presents from house to house, calls for the children, asks their parents about them, and distributes the presents to each according as they have been good or bad. You have doubtless seen this good old gentleman, and call him——what? "*Santa Claus.*"

Eighth Child. Tell us something about "the lord of misrule."

Ans. In the houses of the English lords they would appoint a "lord of misrule" to "make the rarest pastimes to delight the beholder." He took possession of the palace, feasted the tenants, personated the lord, and burlesqued

the manners and costumes of the aristocracy, while the lord of the manor and his family encouraged this fun, making costumes, and providing every thing for the larder that could be desired.

Ninth Child. Where do we get the custom of decorating houses and churches with evergreens?

Ans. It comes to us from an ancient Druid custom, which perhaps grew out of the belief that sylvan spirits took refuge from the cold in evergreens, where they could remain unnnipped by frost till a milder season. The holly, ivy, rosemary, laurel, and mistletoe, were generally used for Christmas decorations. Of these evergreens they sometimes made chaplets for the head, and wore them in their sports; hence the phrases, "Kiss under the rose," "Whisper under the mistletoe," etc. In old Church-calendars, Christmas-eve is marked with a Latin phrase which means "adorn the temples." From this we get the custom of decorating our churches.

Tenth Child. Can you tell us any other traditions or customs about Christmas?

Ans. Yes; but perhaps I have now told you more than you will remember. In England there was the custom of burning the yule-log, or Christmas-block, and eating the soused boar's-head. They made a glowing fire of large logs, the principal of which was the yule-log. This fire was kept up for days and nights, during which they engaged in all kinds of merry-making, music, dances, riddles, conjuring, fortune-telling, forfeits, and feasting. The first dish on Christmas-day was a soused boar's-head, which was borne to the table with great pomp and solemnity "upon a silver platter, with minstralsye." They have a tradition that this custom commemorates the valor of a

student of Queen's College, Oxford, who while walking one day and reading Aristotle was suddenly attacked by a furious wild-boar; he rammed the book down the throat of the beast with such vigor as to choke him to death, all the time crying, "*Graecum est!*" They also had a superstition that on Christmas-eve the oxen all got down on their knees, as in devotion, at midnight. Many a time, when a boy, have I gone out early Christmas morning to see the mud on their knees. But enough.

After another song, the school was dismissed for refreshments. This service may be abbreviated, interspersed with songs, and followed by an address, as the school may desire.

CHAPTER XIV.

EASTER SUNDAY AND SERVICE.

EASTER is the festival of the resurrection. It is sometimes called the Christian passover. As Christmas commemorates the nativity of Christ, so Easter commemorates the resurrection of Christ. The English name *Easter*, and the German *ostern* were, perhaps, derived from *ostara*, or *Astarte*, a Teutonic goddess of spring, in honor of whom the ancient Saxons offered sacrifices about the time of the Jewish passover. Easter was a movable feast, and

occasioned great wranglings in the early Church as to the precise time when it should be observed, until the Council of Nice, A.D. 325, ordained that it should be kept everywhere on the Sunday next after the full moon that came on or immediately after the vernal equinox, except when the moon fullled on Sunday, when Easter should be on the next Sunday, so that it could not be coincident with the passover. By this arrangement Easter may come as early as March 22, and as late as April 25.

In the early Church, Easter was observed as a joyous festival, in which the children took a conspicuous part. Catechumens were dressed in white, and after taking a prescribed part in the Easter service they were solemnly baptized, after which the Lord's Supper was administered, alms were liberally distributed, and in many other ways they made Easter a memorable occasion. It was called "the queen of festivals." The primitive Christians very early on Easter-morning saluted each other with the words, "Christ is risen," and responded, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." The Greek Church still retains this custom in many places, to

which if we add the English custom of making presents of colored eggs, we have a good view of this Easter festival in early times. Colored eggs were used by children in a sort of game, in which they tested the strength of the eggshells. In some parts of Ireland they have a legend that the sun dances in the sky on Easter Sunday morning, and in some places they still keep up the custom of having a spirited game of ball by twelve old women. In some of the northern counties of England, on Easter Sunday the men parade the streets, and claim the privilege of lifting every woman they find from the ground three times, receiving in payment a kiss, or a silver sixpence. The next day the women take their turn, lifting the men in the same way. They had a horrible custom in France of stoning the Jews on Easter Sunday, and sometimes they considered this Easter festival incomplete unless they had stoned some Jew to death. It got to be a common thing in some parts of England for the boys to run about the streets on Easter morning crying with loud voices,

Christ is risen, Christ is risen,
All the Jews must go to prison.

Roman Catholic and other ritualistic Churches

celebrate Easter now with elaborate Church-service and extravagant floral decorations. The traditional white lily, which so long adorned the altars of Papists and Protestants as a beautiful emblem of the resurrection, has invited and encouraged an extravagant display of flowers on Easter occasions which is suggestive of an excess of religious symbolism foreign to the simplicity and spirituality of divine worship in Methodist Churches. It is claimed that the Greeks exhausted the worship of beauty in religious symbolism, and that the Romish Church has appropriated all the Christian festivals, therefore the observance of these festivals by us, especially with floral decorations, is an aping of ritualism and High-churchism, which many cannot tolerate; but as long as the use of flowers at weddings and funerals, and their suggestive association with children anywhere and everywhere, is so universal, the decoration of Sunday-school rooms with flowers at any time cannot be inappropriate. Let the Sunday-school room be appropriately but not extravagantly decorated for Easter; have at least one white lily on the altar of the Church. Sing an Easter-song, and preach a sermon on the resurrection. This much can

be done without encouraging ritualism, or sanctioning Romanism.

The following form of service for Easter may be easily and profitably used in our Sunday-schools:

EASTER SERVICE.

The lesson for Easter Sunday should always be "The Resurrection of Christ"—Matt. xxviii. 1-10; Mark xvi. 1-14; Luke xxiv. 1-34; John xx. 1-18, or John xxi. 1-19.

1. Song, the school standing.

2. Opening responsive exercise.

Supt. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. (Ps. xcv. 6.)

School. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture; and the sheep of his hand. (Ps. xcv. 7.)

Supt. Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion. (Ps. lxxv. 1.)

School. O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard. (Ps. lxxvi. 8.)

Supt. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise. (Ps. c. 4.)

School. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. (Ps. xcv. 2.)

Supt. For the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. (Luke xxiv. 34.)

School. Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. (1 Cor. xv. 20.)

3. Prayer, all repeating the Lord's Prayer.

4. Song.

5. Reading the lesson in alternate verses.

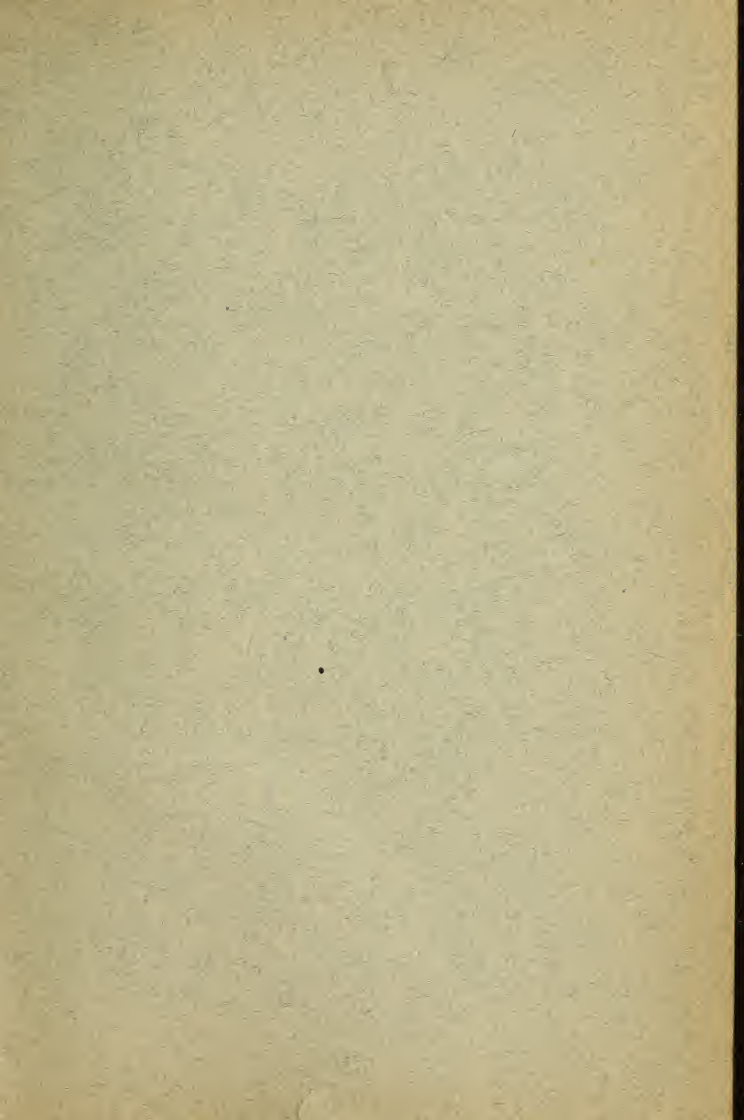
6. Song.
7. A short address, or sermon, on the resurrection.
8. Prayer.
9. Song.
10. The Apostles' Creed repeated in concert.
11. Benediction.

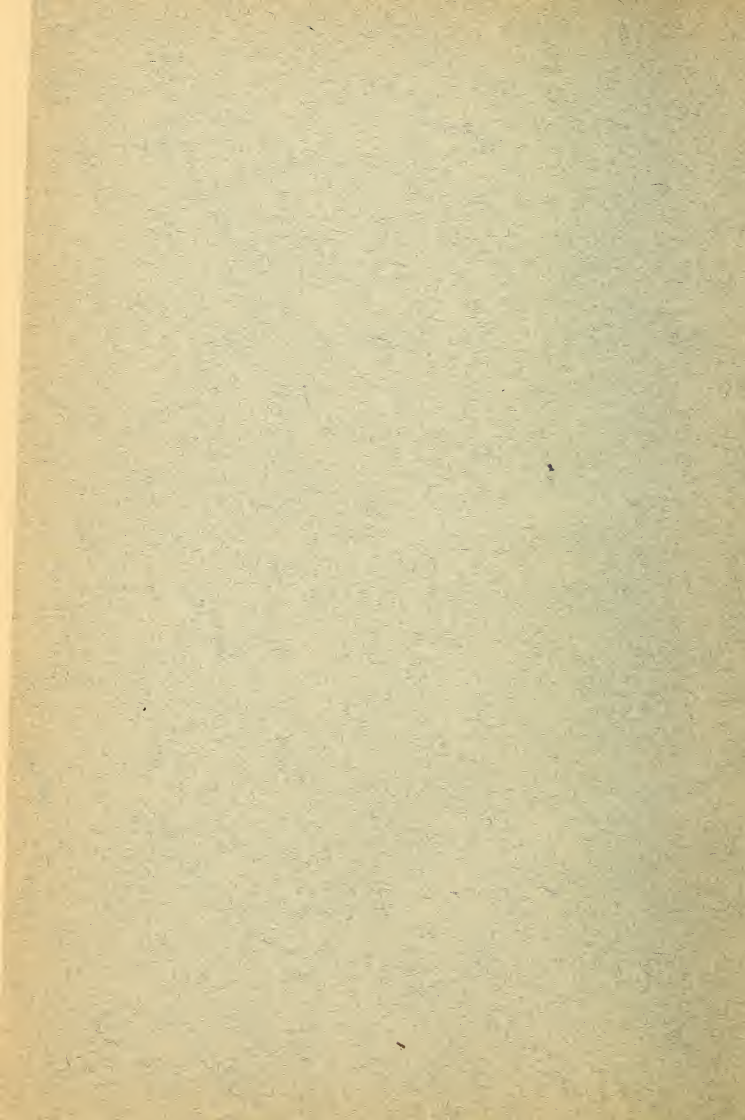
Any part of this service may be omitted, altered, or added to, according to the wishes of any school. If the responses are written and given out to the school beforehand, this whole service may be performed by any school with but one book, to be used by the superintendent or pastor, while the regular lesson can be read out of the New Testament.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

THE END.







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